

**CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2020**

*Lord, you have been our refuge
from one generation to another.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
or the land and the earth were born,
from age to age you are God.
Psalm 90: 1-2*

The Annual Parish Meeting of the Church of the Redeemer was called to order virtually by the Reverend David J. Ware, Rector, during the 10:00 a.m. live-streamed worship service on Sunday, November 15, 2020. He began with a prayer for the Annual Meeting.

Commissioning of the Officers - David presented the officers Keri Frisch, Senior Warden; Steve Sutor, Junior Warden; Tony Brandon, Treasurer; and Fern Riley, Registrar, and led them in reaffirming their commitment to work for the honor of God and the benefit of the congregation.

Election and Commissioning of the New Vestry - The Vestry Nominating Committee considered all the submitted nominations and developed the Vestry slate from among the many qualified candidates. No additional nominations were received after the slate was published; therefore, according to the Bylaws, the slate as circulated earlier was presented. Keri Frisch presented the following 2020-2023 slate of new Vestry Members: Sara Engram, James Guyton, Erin Hagar, and George Tracy. The congregation voted by acclamation to adopt the slate of new Vestry Members. David led them in reaffirming their commitment to follow Christ, and to committing themselves to carry out the responsibilities of the Vestry and to serve the congregation.

Vestry and Officers Oath - The new Vestry Members and the Officers took the Oath of Office. David prayed for these leaders and for the entire congregation for strength in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to others.

Senior Warden Remarks - Keri Frisch, Senior Warden, spoke about the difficulties of the past year including COVID-19 and the isolation of staying at home, racial reckoning, and election anxiety, and she said Redeemer has been a lifeline in maintaining a sense of community and connection. She praised the clergy and staff and expressed gratitude for the many ways they are responding to the pandemic by changing directions and creating new ways for the church to gather and grow. She noted the clergy is providing new opportunities for practicing our faith together with Sunday worship videos, daily prayers over Facebook, small in-person weekday gatherings, and larger outdoor Sunday services; Bert Landman and Robert Chrystal are directing the choirs in making new recorded music for our worship services; Cristina Paglinauan and Freda Marie Brown are leading small group Zoom programs; Jan Schroeder is creating virtual Sunday School, and Rebecca Ogus is leading Youth Programming; Ellen Chatard and Barb Hart are keeping church programs running smoothly in new formats and published Redeemer

Magazine in September; Katrina Schisler joined the staff shortly before the pandemic and is effectively managing our accounts; Mark Schroeder is overseeing on-going buildings and grounds projects, and Giang Vu, Chuan Phan, and he are creating and maintaining safe, clean, socially distanced ways for us to be together physically.

Keri thanked outgoing Vestry members Millicent Bain, Doug Riley, Jan Schroeder, and Anna von Lunz for their service and wise counsel including an extra 6 months through the beginning of the pandemic. She thanked the entire Vestry for serving Redeemer, and she expressed gratitude for everyone in the Redeemer community. Keri gave special thanks to David Ware for his tireless, compassionate, and thoughtful leadership during this unprecedented time, for moving us in new and important directions, and for his commitment to hearing everyone's voice.

Finance Update - Tony Brandon, Treasurer, said the financial condition of the church remains strong and stable in spite of the pandemic. He presented a written Treasurer's Report giving a summary of actual revenue and expenses for 2018 and 2019, the 2019 and 2020 budgets, a summary of pledge income for 2017-2020, and the balances for the Endowment Fund, the Heritage Trust Fund, and the Covenant Fund for 2018-2020. In 2019, the church had a budget surplus of \$62,000. In past years, budget surpluses have been moved to the Endowment Fund, but the Vestry voted this April for the 2019 surplus to be added to the Operating Account to help with the financial uncertainties caused by the pandemic. In 2020, due to the sustained pledges of many generous parishioners and a reduction in expenses from curtailed church activities, Tony anticipates the church will end the year with a \$15,000 surplus.

The impact of the pandemic will continue to affect church finances in 2021, and the staff has proposed a 2021 Operating Budget to be reviewed by the Budget and Finance Committee and the Vestry for approval. Projections of income and expenses are difficult to make in these times, but the proposed 2021 budget estimates an operating loss of less than \$25,000. Tony indicated this operating loss is an amount the church would be able to absorb and is reasonable under the circumstances. He encouraged parishioners to continue their generous annual pledges for 2021.

Tony discussed the major capital expenditure for 2019, the Chesapeake Watershed North Parking Lot Project. The design and construction work for this project cost approximately \$700,000 and was largely funded by the following grants and gifts:

The Chesapeake Bay Trust	\$123,813
National Fish and Wildlife	\$169,458
France-Merrick Foundation	\$ 50,000
Middendorf Foundation	\$ 95,000
Feather Foundation	\$ 50,720
Total Grants	\$488,991

Regular annual draws from the Heritage Trust Fund will contribute to the project, and the Vestry approved up to \$200,000 to cover the remaining costs.

Tony thanked Ellen Chatard and Katrina Schisler for their diligent and tireless work for the church. He noted Katrina came to Redeemer in February following the death of Darlene

Gilchrist last November and said her work has been commended by David, our auditors, the Budget and Finance Committee, and the Vestry. Tony thanked her for her great work and said we are fortunate to have her at the church. He also thanked the members of the Budget and Finance Committee led by Katie Gray and Dick Tucker, and he thanked Dan Dent and his team at DF Dent and Company, all for their wise stewardship of the church's financial resources.

Facilities Update - Steve Sutor, Junior Warden, said although it is quiet at the church in this unusual year of the pandemic, much has been going on in the buildings and on the campus. In February, the American Institute of Architects, Baltimore Chapter, came to tour the church as part of their focus on studying Mid-Century architecture to see this example of Pietro Belluschi's religious architecture. Steve credited the dedicated monthly meetings and work of the Buildings and Grounds Committee in reacting expertly and decisively to the many unexpected issues that arise in our buildings dating from 1855 to 1958, and to the assistance and guidance of Director of Facilities Mark Schroeder and Facilities Managers Giang Vu and Chuan Phan in maintaining these buildings.

Steve noted the signature project of the year has been the reconstruction of the North Parking Lot, designed and planned by previous Junior Warden Tom Spies, CityScape Engineering, Blue Water Baltimore, Alban Engineering, the Caring for Creation Committee, and the Buildings and Grounds Committee. The new lot is designed to filter water run-off to reduce pollution to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and to use native plantings to create a habitat for birds, butterflies and insects. New lighting has been installed for evening events, and pedestrians are stopping to read an educational sign explaining the work and its purpose. As previously discussed by Tony Brandon, the project was funded primarily through grants and with contributions from the Buildings and Grounds budget and from the church. Steve said the lot already has become a neighborhood gathering spot for families with babies in strollers, children on bikes, dogs, and people out for a walk.

Steve reported many other projects have been completed this year, including replacement of the ground floor carpeting and renovation of the restroom outside the choir room; lighting along the main drive sidewalk, and repairs and re-paving of part of the south driveway leading to the Parish Day School; repairs to the HVAC system and replacement of a failed boiler pump; repairs and painting of the chapel wood; tree maintenance and removal of the dead and diseased boxwood along the chapel walkway with plans for re-planting next year; re-designing and planting of the West Columbarium garden by Bert Landman and volunteers from the Caring for Creation Committee and the Flower Guild; commissioning an erosion control design for the East Parking Lot to be started next year; developing plans with landscape architect and Buildings and Grounds member Lydia Kimball for meadow-like areas to reduce mowing and chemical treatments; and placement of chairs and benches around the campus for parishioners and neighbors to enjoy the grounds. Steve said upcoming projects include repairing the slate roof, repointing stonework on the chapel steeple, replacing hot water coils in the chapel, and replacing exterior doors at PDS and evaluating their interior construction needs.

In light of the pandemic, Steve said Mark Schroeder has been working with experts to evaluate the air systems in the church to meet current standards for air flow, bringing in outside air and installing best quality air filters to prepare for the time when it is possible to gather inside again.

Steve again thanked the Buildings and Grounds Committee, Mark, Mr. Vu, and Chuan for their diligent work and support and expressed his pleasure in continuing in the footsteps of past Junior Wardens to work toward preserving the church.

Rector's Address - David said many parishioners have asked him how to hold on to faith, to make space for praise, to feel gratitude for health, family, a job, a house, when so many are suffering right now through the illness and isolation of the pandemic, racial and social reckoning, losses and political divisions and fears. He said such mindfulness is not selfish but rather can lead to action for the common good for others to thrive; he said Jesus calls it carrying your cross. David cited several sources he has been reading and studying for their hard questions and invitation to change and to care for each other despite these difficult times, including *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson, *The Plague* by Albert Camus, the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Ruth, and poetry of Gregory Orr. He shared Orr's poem, "Some Say You're Lucky":

Some say you're lucky
if nothing shatters it.

But then you wouldn't
Understand poems or songs.
You'd never know
Beauty comes from loss.

It's deep inside every person:
A tear tinier
Than a pearl or thorn.

It's one of the places
Where the beloved is born.

David said his annual report is about the unexpected birth of beloved community this year, about the beauty which comes from loss.

The Parish Day School is fully enrolled this fall with the support and enthusiasm of the parents, teachers, and students for in-person learning for pre-schoolers. Director Mary Knott and the staff have created safety protocols and new programs for learning all around the campus. The school has students from 20 different zip codes and has significantly increased student financial aid through a gift from the Covenant Fund. Rebecca Ogus is serving as the new school chaplain, and community engagement continues in the school's weekly food donations, Pedal for Pediatrics to raise funds for childhood cancer research, and Boots for Baltimore. David thanked Mary and the PDS faculty and staff.

The Center for WellBeing has provided Mental Health First Aid training to 77 staff members from 12 community non-profit organizations, Loyola and Goucher students, and Hopkins-Bayview CPE interns. In response to the pandemic, Director Caroline Stewart led Monday on-line support classes from February to July, and a 4-part series, "The Sacrament of Sorrow" in

October. The Center continues to offer individual spiritual direction and is working in partnership with Jewish congregations to train life doulas through a program funded by the Foundation of Spirituality and Medicine at Johns Hopkins Hospital. David thanked Caroline for this work.

Freda Marie Brown has provided leadership in Pastoral Care at Redeemer, and David said she has convened on-line small groups to meet our current challenges. The Conversations: Change and Future Possibilities group discusses current events and considers how participants may be called as agents of God's healing. In response to issues of chronic racism, Freda Marie leads a book club devoted to reading and discussing works by African-American authors. She also has begun to re-organize the "Welcome" ministry to reach out to new people who are finding Redeemer through on-line groups and services. David thanked Freda Marie.

David said Cristina Paglinauan notes many parishioners have been involved in community engagement, including 15 parishioners loading and sorting 1900 pairs of Boots for Baltimore; 26 parishioners volunteering at Govans Elementary School; 6 parishioners volunteering with CARES/GEDCO; 10 parishioners volunteering at the Helping Up Mission Women's Center; 30 parishioners helping to build three affordable homes with Habitat for the Chesapeake; 20 parishioners preparing casseroles every month for Paul's Place and 10 parishioners helping to serve lunch once a week; and 17 lay and clergy leaders participating in at least one BUILD leadership training session. During the pandemic, many parishioners donated items for a PPE drive with Baltimore Health Professionals Mutual Aid Cooperative; 8 parishioners delivered meals to families in need through the Italian Cultural Center; and 24 parishioners volunteered on two outdoor workdays in Johnston Square. BUILD's COVID response team fought for and established three community testing sites at member churches; delivered food to struggling families; developed a comprehensive proposal for the Governor and the Mayor to address high positivity rates in zip code 21224 and other areas of the city; and fought for and secured funding for the city to support working families whose parents needed to isolate due to COVID. David thanked Cristina, and also parishioners who are supporting affordable housing with ReBuild Johnston Square, work readiness and job training with Turnaround Tuesday, and investment in the Covenant Fund, all strengthening our efforts to undo the legacy of racism.

David noted Jan Schroeder is sending seasonal gift envelopes to Sunday School families with activities designed for families to do together to take a break from screen classes. She is working with Maggie Klaes and the program staff to create an alternative Christmas pageant for this year. David thanked Jan and Maggie. He also thanked our new Associate for Youth and Young Adults Rebecca Ogus for her gifts to the leadership team and the Redeemer community. Rebecca will be ordained to the priesthood this winter.

David thanked our new Bookkeeper, Katrina Schisler, and her welcome contributions to the staff. He thank Barb Hart for her dedication to editing and including parishioners in our weekly worship videos. He thanked Ellen Chatard for all her work in budgeting, planning, and visioning our church life with good humor and patience. He thanked Mark Schroeder, Giang Vu, and Chuan Phan for adapting the church, caring for the campus, and preparing welcoming, safe spaces for us during this pandemic. Mr. Vu will be retiring at the end of December after working for 35 years at Redeemer. David said parishioners who would like to contribute to a retirement

gift may write a check to Giang Vu and send it to the church to be presented to him in mid-December.

David gave special thanks to Bert Landman and Robert Chrystal for their leadership in helping the choirs continue their fellowship despite the loss of choral singing and in finding ways to record music individually. He thanked Larry Besel and Jim Bigwood for their time and technical support in editing together these recordings to make hymns and anthems.

Most of all, David thanked the parish for being willing to try new things, tuning in to on-line worship and attending outdoor services. He thanked the 76 people who have begun the Sacred Ground anti-racism classes. He gave thanks for the parish's commitment to the environment by supporting the re-design work of the new, green parking lot. He thanked everyone for their financial support and pledging for next year, and for their commitment to serve others despite personal fears and losses.

David thanked Redeemer for being one of the places where the beloved is born.

The meeting ended and the service continued with the Creed.

Fern Riley, Registrar