

**CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER  
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING  
SUNDAY, MAY 2, 2021**

*He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them,  
Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water,  
and Philip baptized him.*

*Acts 8:38*

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, May 2, 2021. He began with a prayer for the Annual Meeting.

**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 2021-2024 slate of new Vestry Members: Ally Abernathy, Peter Bain, Dixon Harvey, and Kristen Heerema. 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. The new Vestry Members took the Oath of Office, and David commissioned them for their work with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**Sacred Ground Report** - Keri Frisch, Senior Warden, spoke about Sacred Ground, a dialogue series based on documentary films and readings developed by the Episcopal Church to explore issues of racism and to promote racial healing and reconciliation. In 2019, the Vestry committed 10 months to the study and evaluation of this curriculum, culminating in a unanimous vote to offer the series to the congregation this program year. In October, fourteen current and former Vestry members, clergy, and staff began facilitating six groups totaling sixty-nine parishioners. The groups learn about the history of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian/Pacific Americans in the United States and the present day impact of racism. Keri noted many participants have found the work to be transformative, and the parish is joining a larger movement of about 13,000 Episcopalians nationwide who have been engaged in this work. Another set of Sacred Ground groups will be offered beginning in September, and Keri invited parishioners to consider this opportunity to be in close relationship with others to explore racial healing.

Keri thanked Tony Brandon for his work as Treasurer; outgoing Vestry members Lis Green, Beverly Griffith, David Wallack, and Ted Winstead for their past service; and current Vestry members for their continued service. She offered her deepest appreciation to David Ware, Freda Marie Brown, Cristina Paglinauan, Rebecca Ogus, and the entire Redeemer staff for being guideposts during the past fourteen months of the pandemic.

**Redeemer Parish Day School Report** - Mary Knott, Director of the Parish Day School, reported on the the school's experience and response to the pandemic. In the spring of 2020, the school closed its buildings and shifted to meet the challenge by providing learning plans for

parents to use at home. Faculty salaries were honored, families received a return of a portion of their tuition, and budgeted funds were still available for supporting the school. During this time, the importance of in-person early childhood education to promote social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of young children became even more apparent, and the school formed a reopening committee to research, learn, plan, and restructure the learning program to mitigate the risk of the virus while allowing for on-site quality education. PDS has been in session continuously since August with no incidents of viral transmission at the school. Many of the programs have moved outdoors across the Redeemer campus. Parent commitment and transparency have been important, and the PDS community is stronger and more united than ever.

In response to parent interest in growing the school into the elementary years particularly during the pandemic, Mary reported David and she formed a Visioning Committee to consider growth and its impact on the school, the parish, and the Baltimore community. The Committee came to recognize the need for a first grade class. Within ten days of announcing the expansion to first grade for the coming school year, the class was fully enrolled with sixteen students, and a new first grade teacher, Erin Hoover, has been hired.

Mary explained the school's mission is to provide a program unlike anything that exists in Baltimore, grounded in the preschool model of child-centered, multi-sensory, engaged, collaborative learning and play indoors and outdoors in a small, connected, faithful community. Increased financial aid options and longer school hours to meet the needs of all parents would be essential to growth. The Visioning Committee continues to meet bi-monthly, exploring resources and connecting with educational experts to guide understanding and decisions about permanent growth. Mary ended by reading a note from a PDS family, thanking the faculty and staff for their courage, fortitude, resiliency, flexibility, and love. She encouraged parishioners to visit PDS on Facebook, Instagram, and the website to learn more about the school.

**Finance Update** - Tony Brandon, Treasurer, said Redeemer continues to be richly blessed by a dedicated, caring, supportive parish family, and he noted generous parish support, effective cost control by the staff, and favorable market conditions enabled Redeemer to achieve a surplus for 2020 while fairly compensating the staff and expanding church programs. He said staff members Ellen Chatard and Katrina Schisler, the Vestry, and the Budget and Finance Committee co-chaired by Katie Gray and Dick Tucker, constituted a team that provided watchful stewardship of the church's funds. Tony presented slides giving a summary of actual revenue and expenses for 2019 and 2020, the 2020 and 2021 budgets, a summary of pledge income for 2018-2020 and budgeted pledge income for 2020 and 2021, and the balances for the Endowment Fund, the Heritage Trust Fund, and the Covenant Fund for 2019-2021. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, 2020 pledge income increased by \$25,000 and expenses decreased by \$65,000 from 2019 levels for a year-end surplus of \$96,482. Excellent market conditions and superior investment counsel from D.F. Dent & Co. have helped the operating budget with increasing support from the Endowment Fund and have helped maintain the physical plant with increasing support from the Heritage Trust Fund. All gifts last year not specifically marked for an operating budget item were contributed by donor request to the Covenant Fund. The 2021 operating budget is balanced based on decreases in programmatic operating costs due to the pandemic and no increases in clergy or staff salaries.

Tony recalled David came to Redeemer in part due to the unrest in Baltimore resulting from the death of Freddie Gray, and he noted David's sermons have inspired the church to embrace a mission of outreach, to use the resources we have been generously blessed with to support those in need in our city. One of the first budgets under David's leadership included a doubling of funds to community outreach. Then, following the generous spirit of a Redeemer parishioner, the Covenant Fund was established to enhance significantly the church's capacity to do outreach work. Tony indicated the greatest financial milestone of the church during his time as Treasurer was the creation of the Covenant Fund and the distribution of its funds to help others in the community before and during the pandemic. Funds for Covid-related services in the city have been distributed to Memorial Episcopal Church, the Franciscan Center, the Italian Cultural Organization, the House of Ruth, the Helping Up Mission, Paul's Place Outreach, the Y of Central Maryland, Healthcare for the Homeless, GEDCO/CARES, Rebuild Metro, Turnaround Tuesday, the NAACP of Baltimore, Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle, the Baltimore Curriculum Project, the Maryland Food Bank, BUILD, and Govans Elementary School. Funds have recently been committed to the University of Maryland School of Social Work, Coppin State University, and Morgan State University for student funding, and to GEDCO. Funding has also been committed to Rebuild Metro for a ten-year interest bearing loan toward housing revitalization in the Johnston Square neighborhood, and to the Parish Day School for tuition assistance.

After five years of service, Tony announced he would be stepping down as Treasurer to allow for fresh eyes and ears to take up the position. He said he was grateful to David for the opportunity to serve the church and noted it was a privilege and a pleasure to serve on the Executive Committee with Keri Frisch, Steve Sutor, and Fern Riley. David has asked Doug Riley to serve as Treasurer and he has agreed, and Tony indicated Doug would provide the leadership necessary to embrace the growth and change for the church going forward. Doug and his wife, Eileen, have attended Redeemer since 1984 with their three now adult children who attended PDS and were involved with RYG and Honduras mission trips. In addition to his service on many civic boards, Doug has served Redeemer on the Vestry, the Budget & Finance Committee, the Personnel Committee, the Children's Ministry Committee, the Rector Search Committee, the Parish Outreach Committee, the Jewish-Christian Dialogue Group, as legal counsel to the Columbarium Committee, and has been a Sunday school teacher and an usher. Tony offered his thanks to all.

**Facilities Update** - Steve Sutor acknowledged the devoted work of the Buildings and Grounds Committee, meeting monthly to discuss campus projects that are visible and enjoyed by everyone and projects that are less visible to improve and update function and structure. He also acknowledged Director of Facilities Mark Schroeder and Facilities Manager Chuan Phan who manage the many daily issues that arise and know the buildings inside and out.

Steve reported on the planned projects for the year. CityScape Engineering designed and completed work on the clergy and staff East Parking Lot to address storm water run-off and erosion issues, and the drainage in the area after two recent heavy rains has been much improved. The hardware and software control system for scheduling, HVAC set points, and alarm monitoring of the geothermal heating and cooling system has been updated with remote user capability and notification of equipment malfunction. The heating coils and two fan coil units

for the chapel have been replaced. In the Parish Day School, a block wall will be removed to combine two small classrooms into one larger room and plumbing and bathroom fixtures will be replaced in the basement restrooms for the new first grade classroom. The church has contracted with a lighting designer to change the nave's fixtures to energy-efficient, long-lasting LED lighting and to highlight the pulpit, the lectern, and the altar and improve the light to the choir and the congregation; additional work is planned for next year to highlight the architectural beauty in the nave while adhering to architect Pietro Belluschi's ideas about what makes a space spiritual. In response to the need and desire for live-streamed worship services during the pandemic and beyond, small cameras and a new control panel will be installed in the nave. Steve reported Karen Lineaweaver, Courtney Iglehart, Kathy LaPlant and he have re-designed the Women's Council Room, including restoring the use of the fireplace with either a gas or water-based flame and upgrading the technology in the room, and the renovation will begin soon.

Steve reminded the parish about the February, 2020 meeting of the Baltimore Chapter of the American Institute of Architects at Redeemer to learn about Pietro Belluschi's designs and tour the church buildings. As the pandemic surged, the AIA decided to go on-line and created a 2021 March Madness architectural tournament of Baltimore's best buildings. Redeemer was included among the 64 starting buildings, and after several rounds of voting, the church was selected to be in the Final Four along with the first place winner, the American Visionary Art Museum, the second place winner, the Enoch Pratt Central Library, and the Peabody Library. Steve said it was an honor for the church to be considered one of the best buildings in Baltimore by the city's architects, and he noted the AIA will present an on-line video tour of Redeemer guided by Mark Schroeder on May 14 at 1:00 p.m.

Steve thanked everyone, and he said it was an honor to serve in the long line of Junior Wardens dating back to 1855 who have cared for this sacred church and have found the beauty in it.

**Commissioning of the Officers** - David presented the officers Keri Frisch, Senior Warden; Steve Sutor, Junior Warden; Doug Riley, Treasurer; and Fern Riley, Registrar, and led them in affirming their commitment to execute the duties of their offices to the honor of God and the benefit of the congregation.

**The Rector's Address** - David started by thanking Keri, Steve, Tony and Mary for their reports and the exciting work they have led this year. He thanked the outgoing Vestry members Lis Green, Beverly Griffith, David Wallack, and Ted Winstead for their time, leadership, and the community they have fostered, and he welcomed new Vestry members Ally Abernathy, Peter Bain, Dixon Harvey, and Kristen Heerema. David thanked Tony for his counsel, friendship, good humor, and service as Treasurer, and for helping to conceive the Covenant Fund, resulting in nearly three-quarters of a million dollars given to help the community. He thanked Doug for agreeing to serve as Treasurer and thanked Keri, Steve, and Fern for their past and continued service.

David thanked the whole congregation for hanging in there through the wilderness of pandemic: checking in on each other, worshipping virtually and in-person outdoors, supporting the parish financially, and helping to significantly increase support of community partners. He thanked parents and students for working, teaching, and learning from home. He thanked Jim Bigwood,

Larry Besel, and David Cole for editing the hymns and anthems for weekly worship services, the choir and musicians for recording their individual tracks, and Alison King for her work as music librarian. David thanked Robert Chrystal and Bert Landman for their tireless commitment to nourishing the congregation with music, and he thanked Ellen Chatard, Barb Hart, Katrina Schisler, Jan Schroeder, Mark Schroeder, Chuan Phan, and Xiang Ping for their partnership, creativity, patience, and commitment to making everything work. He thanked Caroline Stewart for bringing programs on mental health to the parish and the community through the Center for WellBeing.

David thanked the clergy team, Freda Marie Brown, Rebecca Ogus, and Cristina Paglinauan for the opportunity to serve beside and learn from them. He noted Rebecca will be offering the first Redeemer Prom for RYG high schoolers and will continue to develop Youth and Young Adult formation and leadership development. Freda Marie is broadening adult formation and spiritual development, creating a pilot curriculum, and making the Welcome ministry more engaging and consistent. Cristina will be training leaders through BUILD and will begin to offer YogaMass in January, partnering with local colleges and non-profits, to reach out to the unchurched or those who have left the church, to complement her work in community engagement. The clergy team will continue on-line offerings even as in-person classes and worship resume, including live-stream services from the sanctuary.

David asked for questions from the congregation. A parishioner asked about the status of the house Mr. Vu had lived in until his retirement in December. David said future options for the site were under consideration, including the possibility of using it for the Parish Day School if the Vestry decided to add more elementary grades to the school. A parishioner asked if a new facilities staff member would be hired. David said facilities management has been reconceived, and Xiang Ping, known as Grace to the church staff, is now working at the church, keeping the buildings clean and neat. A parishioner asked if the redesigned Women's Council Room would be more feminine. Steve Sutor said the room was named in 1940 and is now used for a variety of purposes; it will be lighter, brighter, gender-neutral, and more elegant. A parishioner asked if there were goals for growing the Covenant Fund. David said the goals for the Covenant Fund are less centered on growth and more concerned with ways of using the fund to help those in need in our city. He said some Sacred Ground participants have started doing research to learn the history of our campus, buildings, and funding sources and to explore the possible role of slavery in the church's inception and early years. Gifts from the Covenant Fund have been used to repair the economic and racial breach to rebuild the city, including funds to ReBuild Metro to help development in the African-American community. A parishioner asked if Redeemer will be donating to the Diocesan reparations initiative. David said the Vestry would take up this topic and noted that our work so far has been through the Covenant Fund.

David began his address with a prayer from the song, "Jericho Walls" by Andrew Ripp:

All of our fears like Jericho walls gotta come down, come down, Oh Lord;  
rebuild us from the ground up.  
All our fears like Jericho walls gotta come down.  
Our prisons turn to ruin when your love moves in.  
All our fears like Jericho walls gotta come down, come down, come down.

The scripture reading tells the story of Philip meeting a man, a eunuch who is the secretary of the treasury for Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, traveling home through the wilderness back from Jerusalem on a religious pilgrimage. David explained the man was castrated against his will just before puberty to serve the queen and insure his loyalty to her, and he came to Ethiopia from a more foreign place. He was literally and figuratively cut off from his country, his family, the children he would never father, and even from God and would have been considered damaged goods and often shunned. He was probably a “God-fearer” who could stand in the narthex to listen but behind a screen and was excluded as an outsider from Temple rituals and its social life. He is the other, tolerated when people are feeling safe, and the stranger, turned on and blamed when the world feels chaotic.

David said the text looks to Philip to see how a follower of Jesus, now healed, will go on to be a healer. Philip encounters the eunuch in his chariot reading the scripture and goes over to see if he understands what it says. The eunuch asks for help with one passage: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before his shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” The eunuch is someone on the threshold, kept in his place on the margins, drawn to this passage of humiliation, injustice, and marginalization and wondering if the prophet cares for him. Philip sees, hears, sits beside and talks to the man, telling him about his life and conversion. David imagined Philip saying, “Isaiah is writing about a Suffering Servant, a glimpse of the holy one who is broken and vulnerable like we are, and who shows us that God is present with us even in our poverty and our agony, and that the wounded one that we are likely to reject is the very child of God. And I have met this child of God, the son of Mary and Joseph, and he has seen God in me— in all of us — and when I follow in this way, of embracing the God in you and the God in me, the God who makes dust of every wall of separation we build, then salvation comes. Living this way repairs the world, and it heals me in the bargain.” The man wants to be baptized, so he and Philip go down in the water together, stripped, vulnerable, willing to open up to each other, both healing, able to see God in each other across seemingly unbridgeable divides of race, class, sexuality and country of origin through mutual respect by listening deeply to each other. Listening and sharing stories with each other heals us, changes systems, and repairs the world.

David related a story told by Karen Wiseman about a day when she and her six-year-old son were playing at a park when a group of boys began taunting a young girl with a disfigured arm, calling her ugly names and throwing rocks and sticks at her. Her happy play and delightful laugh turned to feelings of terror. As Karen moved to intervene, her son began yelling at the boys, “Leave her alone. She’s just like us.” The boys ran away, and her son went over to the crying, scared little girl. He touched her arm and said, “Do you want to play?” Off they ran, holding hands and laughing. The girl’s mother came by after the episode, and Karen told her what had happened. The girl’s mother said, “This happens (all the time). How do I protect my child from people who fear her differences?” David said the boy and the two men in the scripture today saw the other person as someone worth their time despite their differences. He said we can choose to cut ourselves off from a person we label as “other,” or we can go down into the water together, stripped of categories and pretense, open to possibility, sure of the good news that in Christ we are one great fellowship of love... no longer slave or free, Jew or Greek, male or female. David said in Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north, no longer strangers or enemies

but brothers and sisters, partners and friends, one family, one city, one world under God. Whatever the wilderness or how rough the road, we have learned this year that if we join together in Christ, we are on our way home.

The meeting ended at 11:15 a.m., and the service continued with the Prayers of the People.

Fern Riley, Registrar