

**CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2023**

*Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.
They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us
while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"
That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.
Luke 24:31-33*

The Annual Parish Meeting of the Church of the Redeemer was called to order by the Reverend David J. Ware, Rector, during the 10:00 a.m. worship service on Sunday, April 23, 2023. 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 2023-2026 slate of new Vestry Members: Michelle Gutberlet, Jean Mellott, Paul Smith, and Jim Stipe. 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.

Senior Warden Update - Keri Frisch, Senior Warden, spoke about the church's work on the journey to racial healing and reconciliation. She reviewed the following February 2022 Vestry resolution:

Resolved that a working group be appointed by the Rector to research the relationship between the Church of the Redeemer and (1) the institution of slavery, (2) the adoption of Jim Crow laws, and (3) other practices in Maryland that disenfranchise communities, and report to the Vestry within 18 months the effect of these relationships on the holdings, wealth, character, and mission of the Church of the Redeemer.

Keri said a group of 16 parishioners has been working this past year, learning how to conduct historical research, reading hundreds of pages of material over countless hours in archives and libraries, and keeping the Vestry informed of their progress. They will plan to report their findings to the Vestry at the October Vestry/Staff retreat. This information will then be shared with the parish to process and discern its impact on the pathways ahead for our church. Keri said she is proud that Redeemer has joined our diocese and other churches in Maryland and across the U.S. to more deeply understand our past. She asked members of the Redeemer History Working Group to stand to be recognized and thanked them for their continued efforts in this transformational work.

Keri thanked outgoing Vestry members Sara Engram, James Guyton, Erin Hagar, and George Tracy for their three years of Vestry service through the pandemic and for their wisdom during

this difficult time. She thanked the Vestry and said she is honored to serve with them. She expressed appreciation to the clergy and staff for the light, love, and grounding they bring in challenging times to help remind us to move through life with love and compassion as Jesus has taught us.

Parish Day School Update - Chrissy Levering, Parish Day School Board Chair, introduced the school to new parishioners, noting it was established in 1951 on the church campus and now has 155 enrolled students from 21 different zip codes in Baltimore City and County. She said the school is led by a fantastic group of teachers with an average of 12 years of experience and by Mary Knott, whom Chrissy described as the most devoted, skilled, and inspiring Head of School she has ever encountered.

Chrissy highlighted several hallmarks of the school. She said the school meets students where they are and works with them to achieve success. The Covid pandemic has meant students are coming to school with a wide variety of educational, social, and emotional backgrounds, creating unique needs in each child and challenges for forming and teaching a unified classroom. The PDS staff has been able to help children succeed individually and to shape cohesive classes for effective learning. The school teaches Episcopal values and holds chapel in an inclusive and welcoming manner, and it offers a robust curriculum of core subjects, art, world cultures, music, gym, outdoor learning, theater, Spanish, Korean, and Stories of Faith. PDS encourages students to think of and value others in their community with different life experiences and needs and has supported Boots for Baltimore, GEDCO/CARES food pantry, and the Johns Hopkins Pediatric Oncology program through the annual Pedal for Pediatrics fundraiser. This past year the school launched the "Hi, Neighbor!" partnership with Govans Elementary School, matching first graders from the two schools together to talk, play, and share. PDS students, teachers, and parents volunteered at First Fruit Farms, a non-profit Christian ministry dedicated to providing fresh, nutritious food to the hungry. They also held a diaper and wipes drive for Share Baby and made casseroles for Our Daily Bread.

Chrissy discussed the actions of the PDS Board, a ten person group made up of school parents, parishioners, Vestry members, neighbors from the community, Mary Knott, and David Ware. Board members serve a three year term and meet five times a year to set policies and oversee management of the school to include reviewing school finances, building on areas of strength, and addressing areas of concern. In the last year, the board transitioned from an advisory board to a Board of Governance according to the new PDS By-laws. In order to enhance learning and social interactions and to increase the diversity of the student body by offering after school options, the Board authorized the creation of the Redeemer Extended Day program through 5:30 p.m. and student enrichment offerings in art, science, cooking, and theater. Both programs have been well received.

School community activities returned this year as the pandemic has lifted, and Chrissy said 150 parents, friends, and faculty attended the annual PDS Auction fundraiser in late March in the Parish Hall with donations from over 100 local establishments, earning over \$13,000 for the school.

Chrissy concluded by noting next year the inaugural third grade class will be graduating. She thanked the parish for recognizing the challenging and important work the school is doing to teach students to be confident, responsible, empathetic, resilient, faithful, motivated, and joyful, and she said the current and future enhancements at the school would not be possible without the support of the church.

Finance Update - Doug Riley, Treasurer, reported the financial picture at Redeemer is fine. He presented a written report giving a summary of actual revenue and expenses for 2021 and 2022, the 2022 and 2023 budgets, a summary of pledge income for 2020-2022, budgeted pledge income for 2023, pledge commitments for 2023 as of 4/13/2023, and the balances for the Endowment Fund, the Heritage Trust Fund, and the Covenant Fund for 2021-2023. Doug said most of the church's revenue comes from pledge contributions, and he noted that since the Covid pandemic, pledges have remained steady and plate income from weekend services has increased. This plate income increase reflects new people coming to church, supporting our mission with generous weekly contributions and enriching us with their presence. Doug pointed out developing an accurate annual budget is easier when the church knows how much revenue it can expect each month in the form of annual pledges, and he asked those who are supporting Redeemer without making a pledge to pray on it and consider making a formal pledge using the attached pledge form. The 2023 budget adopted by the Vestry is slightly under its pledge income goal, having received pledge commitments from 368 parishioners, and he noted with a few more pledges, we should reach our 2023 revenue goal. Additional revenue sources include rental income from outside groups using our facilities, the Parish Day School contribution, and investment income.

Doug reported our endowment investments are doing well and recovering nicely from the recent market downturn of the past year. These investments are overseen by the Investment Committee and well managed by D.F. Dent & Company according to Vestry guidelines to avoid investments in companies whose activities appear inconsistent with the overall ethical standards of the Episcopal Church or in countries with little regard for human rights. Doug reviewed the three endowment accounts: the Covenant Fund, started several years ago with a \$1 million gift from an anonymous donor to be used at the Rector's discretion, subject to Vestry approval, to address issues of poverty and homelessness in Baltimore; the Heritage Trust Fund to be used for the care and maintenance of the campus buildings and grounds; and the Endowment Fund, an invested savings account used, if necessary, to balance the annual operating budget or for parish outreach.

Budgets for 2022 and 2023 have both included a 5% increase in staff salaries to help make up for the leaner Covid years.

Doug credited the careful management of the church's resources by David Ware, Ellen Chatard, Mark Schroeder, and Katrina Schisler and the thorough oversight of the Budget and Finance Committee, the Investment Committee, and the Vestry for the maintaining the financial health of the parish and for carrying out the mission of the church.

Facilities Update - Steve Sutor, Junior Warden, acknowledged the work and support offered by the Buildings and Grounds Committee and especially by Director of Facilities Mark Schroeder in maintaining the church. He reviewed the campus projects completed over the past year. The Women's Council Room was redesigned and renovated with new storage, lighting, wall and

ceiling colors, window treatments, upholstered furniture and a rug, a plasma TV to allow for group virtual meetings, and cleaning and conversion of the limestone fireplace from wood-burning to gas. The church nave lighting was switched to LED lights to last for 55,000 hours and use less energy with new controls for dimming and area lighting; the second phase of the project will enhance lighting at the altar, lectern, and pulpit. Exterior lighting options are under consideration to light the stone wall of the new columbarium, the chapel steeple, and the stained glass windows in the chapel and the south transept for evening services. Exterior painting and repair of rotted surfaces on all the buildings is nearly completed with the school buildings and the Cloister Courtyard soon to be addressed. The chapel chancel was painted two shades of blue on the walls and ceiling and a stone color for the columns and ribbing, and the floral carving of the capitals and the ceiling bosses were gilded. The Charles Street stone steps were rebuilt and the pathway entrance to the chapel was replaced with a turf walkway to maintain and update the original main entry to Redeemer. The cross-shaped blighted boxwoods were removed and replaced with grasses and perennials to add seasonal color. The bluestone walkway to the chapel entrance was replaced, a passenger step-out area was added, the stone chapel steps were cleaned, and the entrance landscaping was replanted. An analysis of the church sound system found the speakers to be inadequate for the space configuration; speakers in the north transept have been replaced, speakers for the nave and south transept have been ordered, and the processor for the new system has been upgraded. The annual \$10,000 contribution to the Parish Day School was given to support its buildings and grounds projects. Finally, several legacy projects were completed this year to address deferred maintenance issues for our aging buildings and 11 year old geothermal system including the following: VRV Multi-split AC units controller installation, freon leak repair and compressor replacement, copper roof flashing replacement, differential pressure sensor repair, boiler pump and valve replacement, Taco pump seal replacement, and BacNET card and Microtech III upgrade for the McQuay chiller.

The Rector's Address - David began by thanking the Redeemer community of lay leaders, staff, clergy, and Vestry. Referencing the gospel reading (Luke 24:13-35), he said there are really just two ways to go, that we are either on the road to Emmaus or the road to Jerusalem. He spoke about Cleopas and his companion running away on Easter morning after Jesus had been killed out of meanness and fear when his vision of healing and widening the circle by loving the enemy, the stranger, the neighbor, and ourselves was too much to take for the powers that be. David said they probably felt embarrassed to have felt important, or included, or strong for once, and he said Emmaus is where we withdraw when we have lost hope or don't know what to do anymore. Then a stranger appears, listens to their doubts and fears, and tells them the story of scripture is your story, framing suffering in the context of dying and rising: all of life is a gift; you are your brother's keeper; violence always begets more violence; we are judged not by what we have, but by how we love; the greatest love is to suffer with and to suffer for someone and is another name for God. Later when they are eating together, they realize this stranger is Jesus, now alive, and he reminds them that struggling through for one another is the dying and rising pattern of life. Borrowing courage from Jesus, they turn around and walk back to Jerusalem, now a place of resurrection and a cause they can give their lives for.

David said years ago the people of Redeemer decided to give their lives to the city of Baltimore and walk to Jerusalem. The Redeemer History Working Group is helping us to remember we are standing on the shoulders of lay and ordained leaders who moved past "good enough" to be a place and a people that held themselves accountable to the Way. He quoted one past leader as

saying, “Much has been given to us, and so much is expected,” and another who called the Vestry to build a church for the future, and “not for ourselves.” He said we will have a lot to process and to give thanks for when the History Working Group gives its report to the Vestry in October and we envision a path forward.

David talked about the exciting growth of the Parish Day School over the past three years, soon to welcome 170 children from two years old through third grade to a continuous early childhood education program. The school has expanded areas of learning across Redeemer’s nine acre campus and has added new faculty, after school offerings, a school musical, and new programs to deepen our partnership with Govans Elementary School. Connections between the school and the church are strengthening as Rebecca Ogus is now teaching in addition to leading weekly chapel. Several children are preparing with parish clergy for their first communion at their parent’s request, and PDS students and graduates are acting as church lectors and singing in the youth choir. We have significantly increased the financial aid budget, including \$13,000 from the Covenant Fund.

The PDS Building and Design Committee, made up of leaders from the school and the parish, has been working closely with GWWO Architects and Whiting-Turner contractors to design a new structure for the elementary division to be integrated with the existing buildings through outdoor learning spaces and walkways. Construction should begin in the fall of 2024. David said we are now beginning to measure the interest and financial capacity of current parents and grandparents, past parents, alums, and parishioners to give as generously as they can to build a facility that will usher in our future, engage the community of Baltimore, and offer a transformative experience to current students and families and those of the next generation.

Redeemer youth programs have had a strong year, with 12 youth and 5 adult pilgrims traveling to Ireland last summer, 19 youth confirmands this spring, teens serving as lectors during Lent, and the fellowship and service opportunities of RYG, Scout Troop 35 and our new Troop 635 for girls. Maddie Socolar Benavent and others are leading a group of young adults meeting every other week. Freda Marie Brown is leading adults in enquiry classes, and book groups, Bible studies, and mid-week services are gathering and welcoming new members. David said he is excited to announce a new Director of the Center for WellBeing has been identified, with further details to come in late summer.

David highlighted parishioner work in meaningful community partnerships with Govans Elementary School and Johnston Square Elementary School in tutoring, classroom assistance, and reading to students, and many are donating food and volunteering at GEDCO/CARES. Our work with BUILD, Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development, is helping to heal the city. In October, 70 parishioners participated in the 1,000 person action at Coppin State University to meet and secure commitments from then candidate and now Governor Wes Moore to work on housing, violence, jobs, and healthcare. In February, 50 parishioners joined 300 leaders at Greater Harvest Baptist Church in southwest Baltimore at a press conference with Mayor Brandon Scott to show support for ReBuild Metro and BUILD’s strategy to address the decades-long vacant and abandoned homes crisis in Baltimore. In addition to \$83,500 in grants made to community partners, the Covenant Fund contributed \$190,000 to ReBuild Metro and \$52,000 to other partners last year. Over 100 staff, Vestry members, and parishioners have been trained in

one-to-one relational and house meetings this past year to help in small group formation for continued growth and to welcome newcomers into the community.

David noted worship service attendance is growing, with 981 parishioners at Christmas and 400 virtual viewers, 984 parishioners at Easter, and 312 on an average Sunday with 97 virtual viewers. He said the national Episcopal Church is asking us to participate in a census this fall to better understand demographic shifts. Finally, David said he will go on sabbatical in mid-October after the Vestry/Staff retreat until February, and Cristina Paglinauan will be the priest in charge during that time.

Returning to the gospel teaching about the road to Emmaus as the way of fear vs. the road to Jerusalem as the way of love, David said borrowing courage from Jesus and church leaders past and present, Redeemer is making its way clear. We are giving our lives for the glory of God and the thriving of the city of Baltimore.

The meeting ended, and the service continued with the Creed.

Fern Riley, Registrar