

Rector's Report
The Annual Parish Meeting
27 January 2008

The year of our Lord 2007 was a wonderful one indeed! The Church of the Redeemer is a healthy, vibrant parish devoted to setting forth the most worthy praise of Almighty God, the proclaiming of the Gospel, and the curing of souls. This parish has a tremendous amount of activity going on, but, of course, the most important thing that we do as the people of God is to worship Him. That reality is underscored by the fact that we have more people involved in the leading of our worship by far than in any other activity. You might be interested to know that we have 138 ushers, 117 Altar Guild members, 90 choir members, 71 acolytes, 51 Lay Eucharistic Ministers, 43 Lectors and Intercessors, 18 RAMBOs, and 24 Daily Office Readers, for a grand total of 552 lay persons involved in worship related ministries.

I would like to thank each person who volunteers in any way in the leading of our worship by name, but that would be all I would get done this morning! Please know, though, that I am very thankful for each one of you and for the seriousness and dedication with which you go about your ministries. I do need to thank by name certain persons who lead various ministries. Special thanks goes to Ed Caldwell, leader of our Vergers and the one who schedules all of our Vergers, Lay Eucharistic Ministers, Lay Readers, and Intercessors; Kris Grade, Laura Jones, Laura Crouse, and Ernie Cave, who work with our Acolytes; Fred Sieger, who schedules ushers for Saturday night, Paul Robertson, in charge of our 7:30 ushers; George Bloodworth, in charge of our 9:00 ushers; and Rich Williams, in charge of our 11:00 ushers; Mary Jane Hartenstine, Coordinator for our 9:00 Oblationers and Jennifer Williams, Coordinator of our 11:00 Oblationers; Julie Eisele, our flower coordinator; and Don Laronge, who is our Daily Office Reader Coordinator.

Because I have never called attention to this particular group before, I would like to say a special thank you to those dedicated folks who operate our sound system as well as our lights. These 18 folks are present for every major service, including funerals and weddings, and do an expert job of controlling the sound system. Jim Holds organized this particular ministry and continues to coordinate it, and he does a fantastic job. I thank Jim and his crew of RAMBOs! RAMBO stands for Redeemer Audio Ministry Board Operators.

I am proud of our Christian Education program for our young people. Headed by Jacki Boedecker, we have 48 teachers and 357 students. This ministry is so very important in the life of this parish for the Christian formation of our young people and we thank Jacki and our dedicated teachers.

Related to our Christian Education program is our nursery. Kristin Morton coordinates this ministry and we thank Kristin and all who help with our nursery. I also wish to thank Freda Harris in her work with our four and five year olds.

Brett Watson is in charge of our youth ministry. I wish to thank Brett and the many parents who give so unselfishly of their time, talent, and treasure to make this ministry as strong as it can be.

The Church of the Redeemer is known throughout our community for its excellent music. That starts, of course, with our multi-talented and tireless Dr. Ann Stephenson-Moe. We are blessed almost every Sunday at 9 o'clock to have our choir directed by our Composer-in-Residence, Dr. Daniel Moe, and often we get to hear some of his own creations. What a wonderful blessing that is for all of us. They couldn't do all that they do if it were not for our dedicated choirs. These folks not only arrive every Sunday and major Holy Day at least a half hour early, but also practice at least two hours every week. They do it all to the glory of God and certainly to the delight of his people. We thank Ann, Daniel, Dan Carlidge and all who sing in our choirs.

Our Saturday night musicians also work diligently to make our contemporary mass one of the best of its kind as well. Barry Johnson left at the beginning of the fall and, after a thorough search for a new musician, we brought the talented and enthusiastic Garland Munger onto the staff to lead the music for that service. We welcome Garland and thank him and all of our Saturday night musicians for their excellent service.

Christian Education for adults is also an important part of our common life. In addition to our Sunday morning Adult Forum, usually lead by the rector, Ed Weber teaches the Bethel Bible Study, which is an excellent way to learn about Holy Scripture. Frank Braden also teaches a lectionary Bible Study on Tuesdays at noon, and twice a year I teach an eight week Inquirer's Class, which I recommend not only for newcomers, but also for everyone to do every now and then. In addition, we usually have adult courses on various topics in the spring and fall.

I also wish to thank those who serve on our various committees, guilds, and service groups, with special thanks to Melissa Dunlap, who chairs the Evangelism Committee; John Mercurio, who chairs Finance; Andy Dorr, chair of Capital Improvements; Gayle Salmon, Hurricane Preparedness; Marsha Devitt, Logos; Missions and Outreach, Chip Pfautz; Men's Ministry, Todd Menke, Andy Morse, and Jason Hughes; Planned Giving, Joe Smith; Pelican Mailing Crew, Frank Braden; Women's Outreach Ministry, Jeanne Lewis; Stages of Life, Jeanne Lewis; Daughters of the King, Joanne Miller; St. Mary's Guild, Rita Roehr; Shepherds, Kay Chandler; Caritas, Cliff Pinder; Caritas Pantry, Frank Braden; Vacation Bible School, Janet Trefry; Gift Shoppe, Nancy Boyle, Betsy Engels, and Linda Robinson. The Long Range Planning Committee, which no longer meets because of the Strategic Planning Process, was chaired by Jay Crouse. Our Hispanic Ministry is flourishing under the leadership of Fr. Richard Lampert and with tremendous support from Doris Schweppe. The Spanish mass on Sundays is now averaging about 100 people per Sunday.

A new ministry that began last year was that of Parish Nurse. The possibility of having a position called Parish Nurse was first championed by Jill Stockton, who has witnessed its effectiveness in other parishes. She "sold" the idea to the Stages of Life Committee, which recommended it to the Vestry. The Vestry approved the idea and we then sought a volunteer to fill the position. Elaine Hedrick, a relatively new but very active member of the parish, expressed her interest in that role and I appointed her as our first Parish Nurse. As a result, we have already had two blood drives, a day when anyone could have his blood pressure checked, and a day when anyone could be immunized against the flu. Elaine, who is also in the Daughters of the King and one of our Lay Eucharistic Ministers, is quickly showing us how useful a Parish Nurse can be. Thank you, Elaine, for this wonderful new ministry you have begun. Our thanks goes also to Jill Stockton and the Stages of Life Committee.

Another change in staff occurred when Fr. Andrew Hayler left Redeemer. Fr. Hayler was here on an interim basis until he could be admitted into the United States Navy. We did not know exactly when that would happen, but he ended up leaving shortly after Easter, which then left that position open once more. I called Fr. Joseph Scalisi, who was in his last year of seminary at Nashotah House, to fill that position. He came to Redeemer the beginning of July. He is primarily in charge of Missions and Outreach, Evangelism, and Young Adult Ministry. His wife, Erin, has also made a tremendous contribution as the new director of our Cherubim Choir. By the way, her work has become so well known that a local Episcopal Church tried to hire her!

Mission and Outreach have always been an important part of the life of this parish. Among the many charities that we support is Resurrection House, an ecumenical daycare center for the homeless, which was started about 18 years ago by the Church of the Redeemer. The person who has been the Director of Resurrection House from the beginning is Bob Kyllonen, and at his side all along the way has been his devoted wife, Elaine. Bob has finally retired as of the 31st of December, marking the end of that first grand chapter of that important ministry. Resurrection House, which now serves over 150 homeless people a day, owes so much to the devotion and hard work of Bob and Elaine Kyllonen and I wish to thank them, on your behalf, for giving so much of their time, talent, and treasure to the ministry to the homeless of Sarasota.

2007 also marked the end of a long journey with Jon Roberts. Jon began with us as our Youth Minister in 2000. While in that position, Jon perceived a call to the priesthood. He went through a lengthy discernment process beginning in the parish and then moving to the diocese, and in the fall of 2004 he entered seminary at Nashotah House. The vestry felt strongly that if we sponsor a candidate for seminary, we should help that person financially, so that when he is graduated he will not have a tremendous debt. Thus, we supported the Roberts family for the three years he was in seminary. He graduated in May of 2007, and Bishop Smith appointed him clergyman in charge of Church of the Good Shepherd in Venice. A good many of Redeemerites attended his ordination to the priesthood on the 5th of December.

The year 2007 was also a year of transition for the Diocese of Southwest Florida. Elected on the first ballot at the Electing Convention on the 9th of December 2006, the Rev. Dabney Smith was consecrated to the Episcopate on the 10th of March 2007 at St. Jude's Roman Catholic Cathedral in St. Petersburg. The Roman Catholic cathedral was used because none of our Episcopal churches were large enough to accommodate the size of congregation that was expected. Our own Chuck Miller was the coordinator for the entire event and I, as the Chairman of the Diocesan Commission on Liturgy and Music, served as Master of Ceremonies. Shortly after the consecration, Bishop Lipscomb announced his plans to retire in September, so plans had to be made immediately for Bishop Smith enthronement as Diocesan Bishop. That service took place on 15 September 2007 in our own St. Peter's Cathedral in St. Petersburg. Again, Chuck Miller coordinated the event and I served as Master of Ceremonies.

And finally, in 2007 our Long Range Planning Committee, chaired by Jay Crouse, recommended to the Vestry that a strategic plan be developed, and that we hire a consultant to lead us through that process. The Vestry approved the plan and allocated the funds to hire a consultant. A nationwide search was conducted, resulting in the hiring of Ms. Ibby Whitten as Consultant. We are currently in the Strategic Planning Process as we are encouraging everyone to participate in one of the Front Porch Gatherings.

While we wait for the plan, there are a few things that I would like to challenge you to do this year. If you are on our mailing list, you should have received by now a packet with a few items including a parishioner's checklist. This checklist has some basic, and easy, things for each of us to do. Some of them we should all do, for our own good, as well as for the common good. Others are optional. All of them however, are intended to help all of us become more meaningfully involved with our faith and with our parish. There are twelve items on the checklist, but the most important one is committing to attend church every week to worship with your fellow parishioners. There is nothing more important to the integrity and cohesiveness of our parish than regular attendance in church. This has always been the case, from the very beginning of the Church. In *The Acts of the Apostles*, St. Luke tells us that those early Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

In that checklist I have also asked you to tell us if you have attended at least one six week course of study, for continuing our Christian education is so important at every stage of our lives. Have you enrolled your children in Sunday School? Did you attend the Annual Parish Meeting? Have you visited the Church of the Redeemer Website? Have you put the Redeemer decal on your car? Have you fulfilled your pledge for 2008? (I won't be able to mark that one off until the end of December!)

Since we have a new website, what we would like for you to do is find the checklist on the website and check each item off as you complete it. You can also see how others have responded when you do that. Go to the website today and check off that you attended the Annual Parish Meeting!

All of the things on the checklist will help us be an even stronger community of faith to the glory of God. I am challenging us all to do these things for the good of our souls and the benefit of God people.

I am thankful to be a part of this parish and I thank each one of you for all that you do to God's glory and for the good of this parish. The Church of the Redeemer is a beacon of hope for so many in this world which increasingly ignores the voice of God. When I reflect upon where we are as a society, I believe that it grieves our Lord Jesus Christ that so many do not know him. We are a society that values things and uses people; a society given to materialism, hedonism, and violence; a society that finds it convenient not to believe in anything that doesn't give us exactly what we want, when we want it; and we have deluded ourselves into thinking that everything is basically alright, which is exactly what Satan would have us think.

The Church is the only institution that can fight this trend, which really isn't new; it's simply the way human sin is expressing itself in our generation. We're all a part of it, too. We are all in need of God's grace. And we don't just have a little need for a little grace. We are deeply in need for the salvation of our souls. We need constantly to put ourselves where God can best reach us and we need to help to bring others to the saving arms of Christ.

That's what happens here every day. That's what happens here every Lord's Day. And that is what we need always to take away with us as we leave this place, enlightened by the Word of God and nourished with the Body and Blood of Christ, that all whom we meet will be brought closer to God through us.

For any mistakes I have made in the past year, I ask your forgiveness. I thank you all more than words can express for your love, support, and patience. I thank my hard-working staff and clergy for their loyalty and devotion. And I especially thank my dear wife, Linda, for her constant, unwavering love and support, without which I could not do the work God has given me to do.

The Rev. Fredrick A. Robinson, Rector
The Church of the Redeemer
Sarasota, Florida