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Thoughts on Phillip's Announcement of His Retirement in 2009

By Colleen

So, the elephant has been named, now what? The truth is naming carries great power; it tells us this is real and no longer imagined. It is a reality some may chose to see with dread and angst. It is a reality I chose to fully experience with hope and joy and expectancy.

When Phillip first arrived here some twenty years ago, Redeemer was at the crossroads of life and death. Phillip was energized by that and, in his wisdom, began to plant seeds. He lovingly placed them in the cold, hard ground. He watered them, gave them fertilizer, saw to it that they received the warmth of the sun and then he watched as they began to take root and grow. Again, with great wisdom through the years, he began to invite others to help him water and fertilize the seeds. We all began to watch them grow. In time, we all became part of the roots, part of the trunk, part of the canopy and, perhaps most excitedly and exceptionally of all, part of the fruits of those seeds. Those seeds planted so many years ago in the shadow of the long history of Redeemer with great love and hope and joy and expectancy are now the essence of each and every one of us. We have grown from seedlings to mature trees bearing the fruits of the spirit; we have grown as family and together we have become so much stronger than the sum of our parts.

Yes, it is true that in two plus years Phillip will no longer be with us physically. But, truth be told, he will always be with us as we see the fruits of his vision dancing with life all around us. I intend to spend this time in hope and joy and expectancy for that which continues to offer me life. It isn't nearly here yet and much will continue to happen in the days and months and years ahead.

Phillip is so often heard to say that as a Priest at Redeemer he doesn't have to cross his fingers when he says things, that he and we can all live into the true hard questions of life and faith and hope and pain and joy together. I believe... no I KNOW that there are other Priests in this great Episcopal church of ours who are waiting in hope and joy and expectancy for a place like Redeemer where they can come with their hopes and dreams and visions of God's all-inclusive love.

Phillip and the Vestry, with great wisdom have determined that now is the time to hire an Assistant Priest. This individual will take on all the duties the Pastoral Assistant used to do as well as become the leader of our Sunday School program and so much more for she will be a Priest. It is a brilliant plan that will put us in a position of strength as the

transitional period begins.

As Phillip leaves, this family will enter into a pre-ordained process in which we will define the vision of who we are as a family of faith. We will have an Interim Priest with us for a while as we go through the process of advertising the opening, looking at candidates and discerning whom our next Rector will be. The roots of the seedlings planted those twenty years ago by Phillip are strong and the fruits sweet and full of life. I believe with all my heart we will find the right person who is as anxious to be with us as we with them. Together, we will live into the vision of Redeemer that calls us all into fullness of life and health and wholeness. The Assistant Priest, whom we will soon hire, will be with us throughout this process and assure continuity.

Join me in hope and joy and expectancy for all that was, all that is and all that will be in the days and months and years ahead.

Shalom,
Colleen

Celebrating Women's Journeys May 13, 2007

Redeemer, in its commitment to looking for the presence of God today, as well as in Biblical times, celebrates a number of liberation holy-days. These are days, like Easter, Christmas and Pentecost when we name the movement of God as we experience it.

In the same way we celebrate Martin Luther King Sunday, Recovery Sunday, Gay Pride Sunday and Celebrating Women's Journeys as days on which we name the movement of God, calling us all to liberation and recovery.

At Redeemer we have renamed Mothers' Day as the Celebration of Women's Journeys. For some in this parish this day involves motherhood and for many it does not. What we celebrate on this day is the journey of all women, everywhere, in claiming the fullness of their humanity in a world that says that women are "less than."

This year's Celebration of Women's Journeys will feature two speakers from Redeemer who will share some of their specific journey as women and women in ministry. One speaker is the Joanna Dewey, retired New Testament professor and Jesus Seminar scholar and the other is Joan Conley who is a Drew student on the ordination track to the Episcopal priesthood. Each have and will have a powerful impact on the church, one as lay person and the other ordained.

Gay and Lesbian Pride Sunday

Redeemer, as a "Christian Liberation Community," makes the claim that the actions of God are as fully present today as they were in ancient times. Therefore, not only do we celebrate those actions in the events of Easter and Christmas but also today as people struggle to claim their true identities as Children of God. We celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday as one example of God in action today. Another is our annual Celebration of Gay and Lesbian Pride Sunday.

Within the Gay and Lesbian community, June is Pride Month, which is why we celebrate this service when we do. The focus this year will be the "detoured" journey to gay marriage. Civil Union is just a stop on the way to full marriage. Also in this service we will perform Civil Unions. Individual couples and the people of Redeemer are giving gifts to each other as we celebrate these life long and legal commitments in the midst of a loving and supportive community.

Celebrating Mens' Journeys

For years at Redeemer we have taken the occasion of Mothers' Day in May to pay attention to the Journey of All Women as they struggle to claim their identities as full children of God in a world and a culture that would tell them that they are second best. This day along with Recovery Sunday and Gay Pride Sunday has been one our great Liberation holidays.

In June of every year along comes Fathers' Day. For many of us at Redeemer "fatherhood" is not part of our story. But, it has often been asked on that day, "How about the journey of a man? What needs to be said about that?" Some people claimed the need for equal time. Clearly, to stop and pay attention to the journey of men is not a Liberation holiday. It is, though, a necessary occasion for half of the Redeemer membership to look at the issues they face in a world that has a limited definition of what it means to be a man. This image not only oppresses women, but often men.

This year Gary Matthews will share his story of growing up and dealing with the issue of learning what it means to be man, especially in relationship to your father. Gary who is treasurer of Redeemer and is a financial advisor for socially responsible investments is also a graduate of Drew Theological School and of Union Theological Seminary in New York where he earned a PhD in ethics.

Bishop Beckwith Visits Redeemer June 10, 2007

Redeemer has been most fortunate to be visited by our new Bishop, Mark Beckwith, in his first year. He will come on Sunday June 10, 2007 at 10:30 a.m.

Mark, 20 years ago, was the assistant at St. Peter's Church in Morristown at which time he started the Community Soup Kitchen. From there he went to inner-city parishes in Hackensack, NJ and Wooster, MA. Mark's church in Wooster, All Saints, along with Redeemer, was designated as one of the 300 outstanding Protestant parishes in the country.

Mark has been a champion for justice and inclusivity all during his ministry and has been a friend of Redeemer for many years before he became Bishop.

Mark not only brings leadership and spiritual depth to his position as Bishop, but a real sense of humor and humanity. He wants to be called MARK. This is a day not to miss as our relationship with the Bishop becomes even more important as our parish goes through a time of transition.

Youth Education: Easter Season

By Robin Dexter-Meyer

After joining in the Palm Sunday procession with the adults in church, Sunday School students and teachers went to our classrooms. In the Preschool/Kindergarten/First Grade class, the kids learned why we walk around the church singing and waving palms.

Our Godly Play lesson, titled "Jesus the King," began with the idea that in Lent, we are all on our way to Jerusalem. The children were asked, "Who will show us the way?" Their answers included the prophets, Jesus and God.

In the lesson, the children heard that people were excited that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. When asked why people might have been so excited, the kids suggested that it was because they had not seen him for a long time. The children learned that some people even wanted Jesus to become their king.

A wooden figure of Jesus on a donkey was moved along a narrow beige felt road, while multi-colored cloth cloaks and small fabric palm branches were strewn in front of him. We practiced shouting "Hosanna!" and "Hooray!" Each student got a turn at putting down a cloak and palm branch, saying "Hosanna!"

One of the questions we wondered about afterward was whether everyone was happy that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. Most of the children said yes, but one of the boys wasn't so sure, because he had heard that some people didn't treat Jesus very nicely.

Then we talked about Easter. When asked what was the most important thing about Easter, the children's responses included hiding eggs; palm branches; the Easter Bunny; Lent season and Jesus comes to life.

The children were asked, "If you could tell people one thing about Jesus on Easter, what would you say?" One boy replied excitedly, "He comes to life!" One of the girls said, "He grows." One girl joked, "He hides Easter eggs - no, he

doesn't!" Another girl said, "He celebrated because he came back to life and everybody got to see him."

What do you wonder about during the Easter season? What is most important to you?

What Can You Do For The Environment?

In thinking about stewardship of the environment sometimes the magnitude of the problem seems overwhelming. Sometimes we feel that our meager efforts won't make a difference. But little things can make a big difference when multiplied by many of us committed to doing what we can.

So here's an idea. The environment committee would like to introduce you to decaffeinated, fair trade, organic, and shade-grown coffee.

What is fair trade coffee???

Fair trade coffee is evaluated by TransFair USA, a non-biased, third-party organization that certifies that coffee is grown on small, family-run farms in Latin America, Africa, Asia and in the Caribbean. This organization works to organize small farmers into worker-owned cooperatives and guarantees that farmers are compensated fairly with a living wage. For example, they receive a guaranteed \$1.26 per pound instead of the average of about \$.38 per pound for non-fair-trade coffee farmers. This fair income allows farmers to better afford housing and medical care, and they can keep their children in school rather than working in the fields. Cooperatives provide advanced credit and help farmers to reinvest in their farm to upgrade their equipment. Some of the income is even used for community projects such as schools and health care centers and even farmer-training in organic practices. Fair trade helps build pride, environmental stewardship, community empowerment, and economic independence.

What is organic coffee???

Organic coffee is grown by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources, the conservation of soil and water, and a multi-layered crop rotation. Organic farmers use organic matter to fertilize their plants rather than pesticides and chemical fertilizers that endanger the health of the farmer and seep into the groundwater, threatening the health of the community and the environment. All this is certified by an independent third-party organization that guarantees that the coffee, from the bush to your cup, is grown in a sustainable agricultural system.

What is shade-grown coffee?

Shade-grown coffee is coffee grown under the shade of mixed trees mostly by small farmers and does not require chemicals. Forests and the eco-system are maintained, not destroyed, preserving the natural habitat of insects, plants, migratory birds as well as of the people who live and work there.

What can you can do?

Enjoy this coffee!! We did!!

The coffee at coffee hour will be fair trade, organic and shade grown starting this month. Several months of this coffee has been given as a gift from Susan Wilson, Jeanne Walsh and Fran Szweg, Clarence Taylor and Melissa Truitt, Robin Robertson and Jeanne Ann McManus, Edie Ewing and Joan Slepian.

Give us feedback!! Buy locally!!!

This coffee comes from Smart World Coffee on South Street in Morristown. Smart World has generously donated the cups.

If you are interested in donating a month of fair trade, organic and shade-grown coffee for coffee hour, please contact Susan Wilson.

If you enjoy this coffee as much as we do, make a change at home too. You'll be caring for the environment, assuring justice for the farmers and enjoying wonderful coffee too!

Some Episcopal Church Facts

- The Episcopal Church in this nation grew out of the Church of England which grew out of the Roman Catholic Church. We have not rejected our Anglican and Catholic heritage, but interpreted it in the current era, always breathing new life into it.
- The national Episcopal Church is divided regionally into Dioceses. Ours is the Diocese of Newark and is composed of the seven northern counties of New Jersey.
- The chief pastor and overseer of each Diocese is called a Bishop whose job it is to ordain new clergy, confirm and receive new members and support local congregation to be the People of God in their communities. Our Bishop is Mark Beckwith.
- Other clergy, called priest and deacons, lead parishes. But the primary ministers of the church are called the laity.
- The priest responsible for a parish is called a rector who works and shares leadership with the elected official in each parish, called the Vestry.
- The Episcopal Church has its roots in the Church of England as do other churches founded in the different lands the British Empire colonized. These churches from various countries including Canada, Australia, The United States, Nigeria, South Africa compose an informal body called the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury, as the highest ranking bishop in England is the head of the Anglican Communion.

Inclusive Language at Redeemer

As a matter of justice over 16 years ago Redeemer made a commitment to the use of "inclusive language" in its worship. This meant that we had to go beyond the language provided within the Prayer Book and find new ways to express ourselves. Inclusive language has meant the following:

[1] never using a male word to speak of women. Examples: all mankind or the brotherhood of all people

[2] never imaging God as exclusively male. If a gender reference to God is made, the female gender is also made. God is neither male or female and both male and female.

In practice, "inclusive language" has often meant the removal of all gender references to God. As there is little music that refers to God in female terms, the hymns with God as Father or King or Lord were edited or removed.

"Inclusive language" is not about neutering God, but seeing God as larger than male and female and at the same time fully male and female. Therefore, with the help of the Worship Committee, we will be creating more intentionally male and female references to God in our worship, both in the liturgy and the music.
