

What do we value?**COMMUNITY**

We place a very high value on the strong sense of community that thrives in our parish. While recognizing the value of each individual, we derive strength from our many communal efforts as we travel our shared pilgrimage of faith. We celebrate community in our worship, as well as through the many ministries, outreach and social activities that Redeemer supports. Our mission statement reads, in part, “we seek to be Christ to one another”, and in living that mission, we enjoy a strong, welcoming church. There are many, many ways for parishioners to become involved—adults, youth and children—and great effort is made to encourage all to do so, both as individuals and families.

LITURGY

Central to our parish life is our faith and its expression through the celebration of the Mass. Church of the Redeemer strives to provide an accepting and inviting Liturgy. The circular design of our worship space focuses all attention towards the center, highlighting the celebration of the Eucharist as a shared gathering of a community breaking bread together; a family of faith.

Our many liturgy participants—Planners, Music Ministers, Lectors, Altar Servers, Eucharistic Ministers, Prayer Leaders, ushers, and of course, Fr. Jim—are strongly dedicated and committed to enhancing the celebration of the Mass. Their excellent preparations unite the congregation in a meaningful celebration of the Word and the Eucharist. They are supportive of creative ways to express our faith: songs, poems, readings, testimonies, stories, short drama, interpretive readings, humor and more.

STEWARDSHIP

We value our commitment to stewardship. An individual’s connection to the church community is strengthened through their personal contribution of time, talent and treasure, and the community is likewise strengthened. Parishioners want their contributions to be used in ways that they can see and in results that they can be proud of. A good “investment”, be it time, talent or treasure, should yield a positive return. Church of the Redeemer provides many outlets for parishioners to make those “investments” for the betterment of our families, our church, our communities and our world.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Redeemer places a high value on the religious education of parishioners of all ages. To accommodate the varied schedules of our parishioners, Redeemer offers classes at varied times during the week. They include Religious Education Classes (Preschool up to Teen), Adult Formation Classes, RCIA, home and family-based study for sacraments (First Reconciliation, Communion, etc.), Children’s Liturgy, seminars on various books in the Bible, displays in the commons, articles in the *Good News* monthly newsletter, evenings with inspirational speakers, video sessions and discussions and many more.

Our religious education coordinators are strong and talented leaders who lead by example and are able to generate interest in volunteerism for these classes. Parishioners are encouraged to attend classes outside the parish to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. We are blessed to currently have two parishioners enrolled in the Deaconate Program and others in the Loyola Religious Masters Program.

MINISTRIES & OUTREACH

We value our strong commitment to ministry and outreach, both within our community and beyond. We enjoy a proud tradition of strong community support for the many ministries offered through the church, including Loaves and Fishes, Parish Nurses, CARITAS, Habitat for Humanity, Befrienders, KOVAR, Haitian ministry, Daily Planet, Freedom House, MCEF, HELP, Hanover Health Care, the Refugee Resettlement Ministry and many, many more. As we try to be Christ to one another, we are committed to living the example set by Jesus, sharing faith, hope, love and forgiveness.

What are the signs of the times?

LIFESTYLE

Our changing lifestyle is a sign of the times. Changes in social, environmental and technological factors have had a great impact on the way we live as Christians in America at the dawn of the twenty-first century. There appears to be a loss of some values and personal responsibility, and a growing, secular, restraint-free approach to life, rather than one of dignity, respect and spirituality. Certainly the way we interact with our families and communities has radically changed since the heyday of the “baby-boomer” generation.

The overall pace of life seems to have accelerated, while there is much less time spent with families interacting together. Often, we are so busy running from work to school to soccer to swimming to baseball to gymnastics to scouts and to about a hundred other worthwhile activities, that a quality hour spent around the dinner table with the family is very hard to come by. People feel the need to fill every minute, and it becomes a challenge to just to take a few minutes to reflect, pray, or just be aware of the awesome world around us. This fast-paced lifestyle extends to our community life as well. There is less quality interaction with our neighbors, be they next door, across the street or members of our parish community.

These changes in our lifestyle offer a great opportunity for programs like Small Communities of Faith to provide the catalyst that will help our parishioners to maintain a sense of spiritual and social connection to an open and welcoming community.

COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

We are blessed and yet ironically cursed with the marvels of technology and instant communication that have recently become fixtures in our day-to-day lives. They can be used to full advantage for information dissemination and learning, or they can reduce personal contact into electronic pseudo-friendship. It is a marvel and a blessing that we can instantly communicate with people almost anywhere in the world via e-mail, maintaining family and social connections that might otherwise be lost. But it is a tragedy that many only communicate with their neighbors via a few digital bits and bytes instead of a friendly word and a smile over the back fence. We can call anywhere in the world with the phone in our pocket, but how often do we use it to call a shut-in down the street? Used properly, however, this technology can be a tremendously efficient way of reaching out to parishioners and non-parishioners alike, and can provide an excellent educational resource. For example, our website provides a wealth of current information, including Mass & ministry schedules, downloadable forms, current parish news and photos, Pastoral Council minutes and election information and much more. Also, our parish e-mail announcement list is an invaluable resource to disseminate important news quickly, like the unexpected death of a parishioner, schedule changes due to severe weather, etc.

Through mass media, the internet and other channels, children and adults alike are bombarded with violence, sex, foul language, alcohol and drug use, etc, that reflect society's growing lack of a Christian lifestyle and acceptance of all things secular. We will be challenged as we guide and teach our young people to minimize their exposure to such inappropriate material, while at the same time, allowing them to benefit from the many opportunities that our electronic environment offers.

INSECURITY

In a short period of time we have watched long-standing institutions and landmarks that we were comfortable with and confident in shaken and broken. The current allegations against many of our priests, the tragedies of September 11, 2001, war and terror throughout the world, and economic uncertainty all add to a growing feeling of insecurity that permeates our society. We have learned that many of the things we have taken for granted may not always be things we can count on. These times have contributed to a sense of distrust in our fellow man, personal isolation, and have created a growing need for stronger ties to our faith, family and friends. We yearn for the providence of the Holy Spirit as we face challenges to our sense of justice and peace in troubled times. That makes the recent development of our Refugee Resettlement Ministry even more important, demonstrating that we do not let our fears cloud our sense of social justice, and allowing us to extend our hand of friendship and community to many people and cultures.

What are the signs of the times? (Cont.)

GROWTH

Growth is a blessing in that we have a growing pool of resources, both human and financial, from which to draw on. It shows that the Church is alive and vibrant, and not, as you might derive from popular media or culture, antiquated or dying. Yet as we move into this new millennium we will continue to face the hurdles growth places before us.

A popular TV sitcom of the 1980's aptly stated: "Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name." Church of the Redeemer has always been such a place. We are challenged today, however, by ways to maintain that friendly, welcoming and spiritually satisfying atmosphere as our parish continues its rapid growth. Likewise, there will continue to be a drain on the physical capacities of our church—a crowded worship space, environmental systems, lack of space for religious education classes, offices, etc., general "wear and tear", and all things associated with a building frequented by many, many people.

Likewise, the issues related to the strain of growth also impact our priests. There are increasing demands and stresses on our priests today, while their numbers continue to decline. Church of the Redeemer is blessed to have two dedicated men who will soon complete their deaconate training, a dedicated and supportive office staff, and a large parish of willing volunteers and participants in the Liturgy. Still, the demands on our priests will continue to grow, while for now, their numbers will not.

What do we do well?**MINISTRIES, OUTREACH AND STEWARDSHIP**

Redeemer is alert to the needs of its parish and surrounding community, both spiritual and physical, and works well to help provide for those needs. Our parish is filled with volunteers willing to help reach out in both planned activities and when special needs or circumstances arise. Our dozens of ministry and outreach programs extend our hand of Christian fellowship to our friends and neighbors around the block and around the world. Whether it is a lonely parishioner, a homeless family in our city, or a child in Haiti who needs school supplies, we work to fulfill the need.

We are blessed to be a vibrant community that comes together in times of need, pulling together to get things done—adult, youth and children alike. We recognize that providing a way for people to help others is in itself a ministry. People need to help others, and it is often an unforeseen blessing that those who are there to give aid or comfort often receive more than they felt they provided. Our Stewardship Booklet is filled with opportunities to serve our brothers and sisters, and our parishioners answer the call.

LITURGY

As a community, Church of the Redeemer provides a vibrant, friendly, spiritual Liturgy that invites participation from all in attendance. We are blessed by tremendously talented and dedicated Music Ministers who truly facilitate our congregation “making a joyful noise to the Lord”. Fr. Jim, as well as our volunteer Liturgy Planners, Prayer Leaders, Lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Servers and ushers, all strive to enrich the experience of the celebration of the Mass.

The circular design of our worship space creates a warm, inviting environment, where even those in the “back row” have a clear view of all that transpires, and focuses everyone’s attention on the altar and the celebration of the Eucharist. There is a real connection when our congregation joins hands to say the Lords Prayer, and when we exchange the sign of peace, it is truly a celebration of community.

Mass at Redeemer is a beautiful blend of spiritual and social communion.

COMMUNITY

Ask almost any Redeemer parishioner what they like best about Redeemer, or what kept them coming back after their first visit, and almost without fail the word “community” will be in the answer. People feel welcome and there is a strong sense of community. It’s that “small town” feeling. As we grow, we strive to maintain that feeling.

To that end, Redeemer makes a conscious effort to welcome people of all backgrounds and cultures and to bring them into full communion with the parish. We attempt to welcome those who feel alienated from other churches, Catholics or otherwise. We continue to attract new families to our church, and invite them to become involved and share in our sense of community. Our Welcoming Committee promotes activities like Welcoming Potluck Dinners, distribution of welcoming packets, etc. Our Cultural Ambassador program provides a way to welcome those segregated by language or cultural barriers, and to help integrate them into the community life of the parish. Today, we continue to search for ways to improve our methods of welcoming new parishioners.

What do we do well? (Cont.)**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Someone once made an analogy that religious education could be thought about like an oxygen mask in an airplane. Before you take off, you are always instructed by the flight attendant that in case of an emergency, first put on your oxygen mask, and then help those around you with theirs. The point is that sometimes as adults we become so focused on making sure our children attend their religious education classes, we forget about ourselves. In doing so we perform a disservice on two fronts. One, we neglect perhaps the best lesson we can teach, which is the one we teach by the example we set. Two, we miss the opportunity to nurture and enhance our own faith.

At Church of the Redeemer we have a robust religious education program that provides a wide variety of opportunities for all parishioners to enhance their faith. There are comprehensive programs that cater to young children, youth and adults alike. There are varied topics to appeal to a wide variety of parishioners, and different schedules to allow for the many lifestyles in our parish.

Some of our programs are taught in a structured class setting, and others are better suited to a more casual, home-based curriculum. There are lectures, video presentations and group discussions to name a few. We strive to integrate a Small Community of Faith component into the working meetings of many our groups and committees, setting aside time on the agenda for faith sharing and social interaction.

Our Minister of Religious Education and our catechists, be they staff or volunteers, show great devotion, dedication and leadership in their efforts to enrich the spiritual lives of all our parishioners.

What are the challenges for the future?

GROWTH

We face the challenges of a growing parish—an increasing need for more space, the potential loss of our strong sense of community spirit, assimilating new people, languages and cultures, and ministering to an ever-growing population in our parish and community. As a parish, we must find creative ways to meet these challenges, and assist Father Jim as the demands upon him become greater.

YOUTH

Keeping youth (as well as adults) focused on Christ and the Church is a challenge for all churches. Providing programs that attract and hold the interest of the youth, and can compete with the secular world is an area that needs full attention. We must explore ways to incorporate their participation, reduce their tendency towards apathy, motivate them to recognize the needs of the parish and nurture their enthusiasm to continue to interact with parishioners by getting involved in the many ministries that are available.

We must address the fact that more and more youth and their parents are already "over-scheduled", and time spent in church activities is consistently relegated to a lower priority. As our youth become young adults—especially around the time they leave home or go away to college—they face a loss of community at a critical time. It is important that we find ways to keep them connected to one another and to our church, offer guidance in their needs and challenges, and to strengthen their belief that there is a church they can sink "roots" in.

VOCATIONS

We must create an atmosphere within our parish that will cultivate, not quell interest in vocations. We must face the challenges brought about by our growing parishes and the shrinking number of people answering the call to serve as Priests and Nuns. We must help our Priests and Sisters do more with less.

Also, we must work together so that all of us—Priests, Nuns and Catholic laity—can overcome the stress, guilt, anger, embarrassment, and other emotions brought on by recent scandals in the church. We must work tirelessly to ensure that the circumstances that brought about the current scandals are changed, to remove those who have committed wrongful acts and pray for their forgiveness, to protect those unjustly accused, and most importantly, offer our prayers, all our resources and welcoming, open arms, to those who have been victims of wrongdoing.

STEWARDSHIP

As we grow, and therefore the needs and demands of our parish grow, we must work to maintain our commitment to the idea of Stewardship. We must find creative ways to work within our limited resources. We must find ways to instill the idea that what we offer to the Lord, whether it is time, talent or treasure, should come from the "first fruits", and not as an afterthought. We will continue to find ways to improve our stewardship process, and offer more and varied ways for our parishioners to become involved.

KEEPING CONNECTED

While we live in a world of instant communication, we still face the challenge of keeping people connected. Whether at home with our families, in our church, at school or away at college, out in our communities, here within our diocese, or far beyond its borders, we must work to stay connected.

Maintaining a sense of unity becomes a challenge when the parish as a whole is made up of a large diverse group with different focuses, ideas and outlooks. Creating a community that fulfills these varied outlooks, while still adhering to our Catholic beliefs, will be an ongoing challenge. We must work to give our homebound parishioners the opportunity to remain active in parish life.

The importance of faith sharing in family life is critical. While the family is attacked on several fronts by consumerism, materialism, moral relativity, social fragmentation, among many others, a renewed focus on family prayers, scripture sharing and study would give a religious and moral perspective to children and parents as well. The Small Community of Faith initiative is a practical opportunity to gather families in faith sharing and learning.