



Redeemer News

Church of the Redeemer UMC

December 2016

CONNECTING, CULTIVATING, CHALLENGING, AND CELEBRATING ALL IN CHRIST

IN THIS ISSUE

The end of the beginning

by Pastor Shannon

While I am not a winter person—I'd much rather move straight from crispy fall into verdant spring—I absolutely love Christmas. The songs, the smells, the sense of community and family, are ripe with promise as we gather to bring one year to its end and witness the beginning of another.

We are at the beginning of a new year in the church as well, having cycled through the liturgical seasons to end at the beginning of the Gospel. After 400 years of silence from God, an aging priest goes behind the veil and into the Holy of Holies, where he learns that he will have a son—and that son will prophesy the coming of God made flesh. Thus begins a month of growing anticipation as we wait to encounter the Christ child anew.

As you will read on in our Advent section, this year's lectionary selections will take us on a journey in which we reflect on the promise of Christ's second coming through the lens of anticipating his first. This will set us on the path, as a church, to rediscovering the Jesus of Scripture and the relevance of his teaching for witnessing to a 21st century world.

God moves in every moment, so it is no coincidence to me that this series of

messages and studies comes at a time when the UMC and other denominations are facing the reality that "church"—and *the* church—are in a time of fundamental transformation.

We must always cherish and respect the traditions and the witness of those who have shaped our witness for Christ to this point. To remain grounded in those things, however, should not prevent us from seeking new ways to be radically faithful to Christ's message and purpose.

Like the world into which the living Word was born, our world will continue to change in ways we cannot imagine. But in faith and hope we will move into a season of new beginnings together, with the memory of good fruit previously borne to spur us on.

Let us watch for the coming Christ as a family of faith and observe all the ways that God is moving through us—right where we are—to bring God's kingdom to bear.



Welcoming the Christ Child: Advent 2016

As we enter this season of anticipation, learn how the Christmas story can prepare us for the coming of Christ's eternal kingdom.

Page 3



We remember

Two All Saints Day services allowed us to remember our loved ones as a community.

Page 2

All Saints Day 2016



On November 6, Redeemer joined the universal church in observing All Saints Day (November 1). It is the moment when the veil between life and death is thinnest, and we can be in communion with the saints who have gone before as we consider what is required of us saints who remain on earth.

We were blessed to celebrate and remember the lives of those members, family, and other loved ones who have passed into the life

eternal with Christ this past year. During the litany, several members also spoke the names of loved ones who have passed on in prior years. They may be gone from our sight, but they are not forgotten.

In this year's All Saints Litany, we remembered the following Redeemer members who have gone to God in the last year:

Pat Steinfurth (12-8-2015)
Ginny Goodwin (6-7-2016)
Rose Williams (9-2-2016)
Becky Stager (9-6-2016)
Doris Sims (9-9-2016)

Thanks to Kari Queen for her simple but powerful altar design, in which the All Saints candles took center stage. Through this year's litany, we lit several candles:

- One candle for each COR member who passed away this year
- One candle for parents, grandparents, and parent figures
- One candle for sisters, brothers, and cousins
- One candle for the children who have walked before us into God's arms
- One candle for spouses and partners
- One candle for dear friends

The final candle remains unlit, as a reflection on those who will join both the numbers of we who remember but also the multitudes of heaven in the coming days, weeks, and months.

If you would like an additional copy of the All Saints Day litany, please contact the church office.

(Photo credit: Marj Craft)

RMN Open Table Service

Thank you to everyone who attended our Open Table service on November 6, held on behalf of the East Ohio Reconciling Ministries membership.

Visitors from across East Ohio, even as far as Delaware, Ohio, came together for a moving time of worship, remembrance, and communion. Together we considered the story of Esther, a god-fearing Jewish woman who found herself placed on the throne of Persia just as a wicked court official would seek to wipe out her people.

Like Esther, we who follow Jesus are facing social and ecclesial challenges that require us to discern and follow God's purpose for placing us in just such a time and place.

The service began with an All Saints litany dedicated to the thousands of LGBT+ community members who have died because of violence against their bodies and souls; those who remain dead to their true identities because of fear and discrimination; and in particular, LGBT+ youth who suffer

the loss of their most critical support systems. A single candle remains unlit as a sign of our trust in the God who redeems and brings light to even the darkest places.

After the service, we enjoyed a time of fellowship with our visitors. Special thanks go out to all of the volunteers who arrived early to set up and who brought dishes to share!

The next Open Table Service will be at Peninsula UMC; see the church for details as they become available.



RMN Planning Meeting

Prior to the Open Table service, members of East Ohio Reconciling Ministries met to discuss opportunities for engagement throughout the conference in the coming year. We are excited for the growing number of churches that are interested in hosting Reconciling services or joining the Reconciling movement!

We also discussed potential guest speakers for the Open Table service to be held at Annual Conference 2017 and the potential for sharing that time with our sisters and brothers in MFSA.

During this time of uncertainty in our church and our society, it's more important than ever to reach out in radical love. If you want to get involved with East Ohio Reconciling Ministries, please see Pastor Shannon.

East Ohio Reconciling Ministries is on Facebook!
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/eastohiormn/>

Advent 2016: Beginning at the End

Advent is the season when the church prepares for the celebration of God's gift of Jesus to the world. We also remember our need to be ready for the second coming of Christ, though none knows the hour.

From UMC Discipleship Ministries: "We anticipate the Christ's **second** coming to fulfill all things as a means to prepare ourselves for the celebration of his first coming during Christmas season." It is the beginning of a new year in Christ!

Advent Sermon Series

This year's Advent sermon series, developed by UMC Discipleship Ministries, will focus on key themes that we discover in Jesus' teachings of the Gospels. Each week, the Mission Committee will also spotlight one of their current ministries.

November 27: Watch

The series begins where Advent begins, with the call of Jesus to his disciples to stay on watch for the fulfillment of all things.

December 4: Turn

We are invited to turn from our attachments to the powers of death and destruction in this age, and live out of the Spirit-led mission of the coming reign of God.

December 11: See

Once we have turned toward the fulfillment God intends, we begin to be able to see the world and treat others in it in a new way.

December 18: Dream

Even as we begin to see God's way of compassion and mercy, we also—like Joseph—come to acknowledge our reliance on God communicating with us and transforming us...awake and in dreams.

December 24: Peace

Whether in dreams or visions of angels, we see and hear and join the chorus of the heavenly host announcing the birth of Jesus as a sign of peace to all people of good will.

December 25: Word

We contemplate the mystery of the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

January 8 (Epiphany Sunday): Reveal

The constellations reveal the birth of Messiah, and the powers of this world are revealed for their violent resistance to the saving work of God.

As always, the adult Sunday School will work through the weekly Scriptures in preparation for the message to be shared at worship.

We will also welcome members who have volunteered to light the Advent candles each week.

Advent Worship at Home

Are you looking for a way to observe Advent at home or to help share its meaning with your children? UMC Discipleship Ministries has a number of ideas to make your Advent home worship fun and meaningful:

Make your own Advent wreath: wrap greenery around a Styrofoam base or a candleholder with room for four purple candles. The wreath represents life and God's never-ending love for us.

Each day, light the candles and share in the Advent meditation (found at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/2016-advent-home-worship>). You may also add a white candle to represent Jesus, which may be lit on Christmas.

For little ones, an Advent prayer chain is fun and easy: cut a piece of construction paper into 24 strips and write a prayer on each. Glue the strips into loops, making a chain. Then, for each day of Advent pull a loop off the chain and pray for what's written on the paper.

Another way to count your blessings is to create family blessings jar. Place an empty jar in a prominent place, and each day place a blessing you experienced inside. On Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, open the jar and read out all of the blessings together!

Christmas Eve & Day Services

We are blessed that Christmas falls on a Sunday this year, so we can celebrate the

birth of Christ together! As you are planning your own family celebrations, please keep the following in mind.

Christmas Eve service will be **Saturday, December 24 at 6 pm**. This is an hour earlier than last year, to accommodate our youngest members. Children are invited to participate in a musical nativity directed by Shanelle Cook. We will also sing carols and light candles to await the arrival of the Christ child.

Christmas Day service will be **Sunday, December 25 at 11 am**. We're having a **Love Feast!** Rather than a traditional worship service, we will celebrate Christ's birth with songs and a communion-style breakfast in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Shannon will give an abbreviated message, but this will be a very laid-back service.

If you know you will be out of town for Christmas weekend, please let the church office know so we can plan accordingly for the love feast.

POINSETTIA SALE 2016

Remember your loved ones at Christmas Eve service by ordering a beautiful poinsettia plant for the altar arrangement—take it home after service!

Orders and payments must be turned in to the church office by **Sunday, December 11** to place the order in time.

Sizes: Single (6 blooms), Double (9 blooms), Triple (15 blooms)

Colors: Red, White, Pink, Burgundy, Marble, Jingle Bells (bleached look)



PHOTOS FROM CHARGE CONFERENCE



Above: DS Steve Bailey shares reflections on the changing church.

Right: Worshipers take in the message. Photo credit: Rev. Andy Call, COTS



Lay Leader Phil Holland served as a communion steward during our morning worship.



Worshipers gather to take communion following DS Steve Bailey's motivational message.

COR LEADERSHIP 2016

Congratulations and thanks to the COR members who have stepped out in servant-leadership for 2017, and to those who are returning to their positions!

Welcome to the following new committee members and incoming chairs:

- James Graham, Nominations
- Brenda Grover, Nominations
- Jane Finley, Staff-Parish Relations
- Denise Rowell, SPRC (Chair)
- Arleen Twist, Treasurer
- Mary Bronson, Financial Secretary
- Carolyn Cacho Bowman, Care Team (Chair)
- Denise Education, Christian Education (Director)



Charge Conference 2016: Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

As advertised, the 2016 Charge Conference for the east side churches of the North Coast District was a productive and enjoyable gathering. The morning opened with refreshments provided by hosts Church of the Saviour and a time of fellowship with our sister churches.

Following a time of worship and communion, the 7 gathered members voted on updating Redeemer's membership rolls, approving the 2017 Leadership Roster, and approving the continuation of our lay servants.

Though conducting church business was both necessary and painless, the real joy of the morning was the message given by District Superintendent Steve Bailey. The church is in a time of transition, and the church that will emerge will not look the way it used to.

DS Bailey challenged those of us gathered to innovate and imagine ideas to disrupt our traditional way of thinking and revitalize our ministries with fresh perspectives. We have his permission, as well as Bishop Malone's, to do things differently!

One specific challenge that we will adopt as a goal for 2017 is to identify one new way for our church to enter and engage with our greater community and share the amazing love and radical grace of Jesus with those who haven't heard it or who long ago stopped believing it.

Beginning with the Advent season, Pastor Shannon's bulletin board will transform into the *Good Ideas* board. Write down and post your craziest, most radical idea to be Christ to others and grow in discipleship, and we will explore your ideas together!

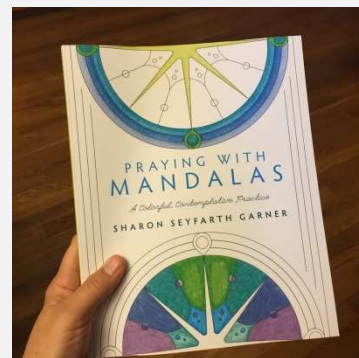
A number of opportunities to "do church differently" are in the works and will be shared with the membership as they come together. In the meantime, let's all pray for God to come in and shake us up so we look more like Christ's Kingdom on earth!

PRAYING WITH MANDALAS

UMC Pastor and Sharon Seyfarth Garner, director of Belly of the Whale Spiritual Direction & Retreat Ministries, has published *Praying With Mandalas: A Colorful, Contemplative Practice*.

Praying with Mandalas serves as a guide toward a more heartfelt and tangible experience of prayer. Each chapter includes inspirational stories, words of explanation, tips for getting started, 10 blank mandalas for coloring, questions for reflection, and a prayer of dedication.

This book will make an excellent gift for loved ones or for your own prayerful use. To purchase, visit www.prayingwithmandalas.org.



Single-Board Meetings to Resume January 2017

September's single-board meeting was an experiment to demonstrate how Redeemer can do church business more effectively—giving us more time to pursue meaningful ministries in and out of the church building. Despite the success of the initial meeting, the momentum was difficult to maintain into the following months; we are thus now three months out from our initial experiment.

However, beginning in January 2017 we will give the single-board format another go!

Single-board meetings will take place on the second Sunday of each month from January* until June, beginning immediately after service is finished. Coffee hour volunteers will be asked to set up in Fellowship Hall on single-board days.

Members are invited to bring their lunch, or to bring a dish to share if they are led; however, we will not have a formally structured lunch.

The basic meeting format will be:

- **Welcome (5 minutes):** Take this time to get a snack and gather into your committees
- **Committee breakouts (30 minutes):** Individual committee business. Identify issues to share with the whole body.
- **Whole group reporting (20 minutes):** Committees will report on *action items* for the coming month; the body will vote to approve items requiring such approval.
- **Closing (5 minutes)**

Each committee should prepare an agenda to facilitate more effective discussion during the time allotted; also, committees are requested to keep minutes of their individual business. All meeting minutes should be sent to Pastor Shannon following the meeting.

Meetings will be held on the following dates:

- **January 15 (third Sunday, to accommodate taking down of the greens)**
- **February 12**
- **March 12**
- **April 9 (Palm Sunday)**

During the April meeting we will evaluate the effectiveness of the single-board format and decide whether to extend it into the 2017-2018 conference year.

Thank you all for your commitment to helping COR live out its mission to Connect, Challenge, Cultivate, and Challenge ALL in Christ!

Winter is Coming at CoR!

Amazon Smile

Support COR while you shop!

Do you shop on Amazon for holiday gifts or everyday items? If so, you could help COR raise money!

The next time you need an Amazon fix, visit smile.amazon.com instead of the main site. Click to select your charity, and search for "Church of the Redeemer Methodist" in Cleveland Heights. Next: shop your heart out!

COR will receive .5% of every qualifying purchase you make on AmazonSmile from your computer or phone browser (not compatible with the app yet, sorry!) So the next time someone questions your online shopping, you can tell them it's all for a good cause.

Christmas Bake Sale

Sunday, December 11 after church

Stop in the Education Wing after service on December 11 for sweet treats to brighten

your Christmas season! Selections will include bread, cookies, brownies, jam, scones, quiches, popcorn, and candy, plus sandwiches to take home!

December Community Meal

Tuesday, December 27, 5 pm

This month's Community Meal is a great way to share Christmas blessings with our guests from the community. Please see Carolyn Cacho Bowman for more information about food needs for the meal, and make a plan to join us for serving and sharing this holiday meal.

#WEDNESDAYWISDOM ON FACEBOOK

Do you follow Church of the Redeemer on Facebook? If so, tune in on Wednesdays for snippets of #wednesdaywisdom from Pastor Shannon! Each week there will be a blog post or a short audio clip discussing current events and the church or diving deeper into the message from the previous Sunday's worship.

If you aren't on our Facebook page, stop what you're doing and join the fun! You can find us at:

www.facebook.com/ChurchOfTheRedeemerUMC

