

Facts and Statistics about Redeemer Lutheran Church, East Falls

Synod's cited constitutional basis for involuntary closure: Diminished numbers making it impossible for us to continue our mission. This claim is refuted by the following facts, all of which have been presented to the synod in conversations since last July. This is a vital, growing Christian Community!

Fast Facts

Number of active members today who were also members in 1998	3 including one child	
People joining in the last ten years:	92 (some transients as is to be expected in urban neighborhood)	
Synodical attempts to close congregation	1998 Seized assets in February 98 Released from administration 1999 Assets not returned for additional year	2008 Declared closed without review of any complaints
Active Membership	approximately 20 (more than 30 left when the bishop seized assets)	72 membership status of 8 more uncertain 2 infants awaiting baptism
Number of services per year	56	106
Number of Bible studies	A few sporadic	Began weekly last fall
Choir	Individual artists only	20 involved in choir/cantatas 8 in children's choir
Special prayer meetings	0	Monthly and as needed
Number of active committees	2 Property and Combined Worship/ Education	5 Property, Worship, Finance Fellowship, Education
Pastoral Help	None Sporadic part-time supplies for most of last 10 years Regular contact with synod requesting names	Resolution presented to synod Nov. 1, 2007 to call Pastor Festo Mutashobya No action to date
Visitors	Frequent (almost weekly) visitors from revitalized community	

Additional fulfillment of mission in past two years

- Assisted neighboring congregation (Epiphany) whose building was condemned. Intent for 14 months was to merge councils and memberships. Epiphany congregation voted against this and turned their assets over to synod. Synod is using statistics from this low point in recent history. We have recovered from this rough spot.
- WEEKLY visits to a member's relative in prison
- Church member and pastoral visits to shut-ins
- Helped with Thrivent Habitat for Humanity project
- Fostered Swahili Ministry beginning with the eight Swahili members who had belonged to Redeemer for more than eight years. Very successful and continues. 52 members joined as result of this ministry.
- Four families from our church attend Lutheran Family Church Camp and continue to be core to this camp's success. Several more families are interested in attending this year.
- Participation in Ecumenical Programs (best worship attendance of all churches at recent shared Lenten series)
- Provided low (less than cost) rent to community groups

Innovations:

We developed a liturgical format which uses both English and Swahili. At Christmas we adapted a published Cantata for our church's mixed choral styles. At Easter, we wrote and produced our own Cantata which was performed at Community Service and very well received. We regularly have performances of original church music. We successfully unified new communities into active church life. There are visitors almost every week. We are located on prime cultural corner in a neighborhood targeted for redevelopment and we are ready to be part of community efforts. Leadership abounds in this congregation. At any service there will be participation from as many as eight leaders and all members are ready and willing to fill in for others when they are absent.

Long-term planning:

In November 2007, we presented a plan to the synod for funding—from our own resources—a full time ministry. We had informed them we were working on this plan in July. Plan is do-able and forward looking and includes ideas and commitment to help all urban ministries — not just our own! Plan reviewed and endorsed by independent experts. Volunteer CPA will oversee financing. Agreement with prospective pastor already reached.

Cash assets

Synod quotes depletion of \$150,000 endowment (which we had for only about 10 years when synod first seized it). For prior 80 years we existed on our assets — property and offerings. About \$60,000 remains. Synod held \$90,000 for more than 2 years, returned only \$80,000 and paid no interest. \$40,000 was spent defending against synod actions, \$10,000 invested in repairs to our rental property. We have used less than \$4000 per year on operating expenses and some years used none at all. With improved membership this need should be eliminated. The endowment was designated for ministry in East Falls.

Property assets have tripled in market value in the last 15 years. Property assets include adjacent lot with commercial building which can be rented or sold, depending on best option to suit ministry objectives. We have rented this at favorable rates to a Lutheran Social Service Agency for 25 years, which is now cooperating with Synod in takeover attempt. All properties built and maintained without synod assistance.

Plans/Goals for this year

- Provide consistent pastoral services to members and neighborhood for first time in 10 years
- Renovation of 50-year-old kitchen to be completed by summer with contractor pledging profits to the building of an orphanage in Tanzania. Project to be funded entirely by special fund-raising efforts, already planned.
- Increase parish participation in church camping
- Grow individual leadership skills for every member (as we do every year)
- Develop resources for multicultural worship to share with other multicultural congregations. (We have three ready for publication. These are designed for small churches to be used with very little professional leadership and musicianship.)
- Increase membership 10%
- Begin stewardship drive which is made much more difficult by synod's actions
- Continue to foster multicultural ministry efforts
- Through community educational program, offer Swahili language lessons and offer participants a place to practice using the language by inviting them to events at our church. If this is successful, replicate program in Spanish.
- Research ways to reduce winter heating bills

Final statistics

Number of times bishop and “trustees” worshiped or attended a Redeemer event at Redeemer	0
Number of times bishop, “trustees” or dean responded to our attempts to communicate from December '06 to Feb '08	0
Number of times “trustees” met with us to verify their “findings” before announcing decision to close	0