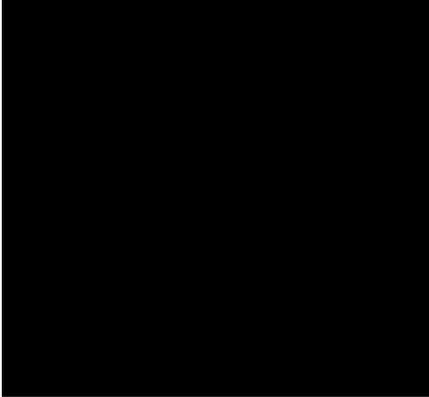


On Sunday morning, September 27, 2009, SEPA Synod changed the locks of Redeemer Lutheran Church, evicting and effectively excommunicating the congregation. All community groups using the property were also evicted, including four AA meetings and a Day Care Center scheduled to open in two weeks. They told the court and the community they would reopen the church in six months, but three years later the doors remain locked to all. Nevertheless, Redeemer's ministry continues. As we teach our children: *The church is not a building; it is the people.*



**The Triennial
Report of
Redeemer Lutheran
Church**

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**East Falls
Philadelphia
September 2012**

Redeemer Lutheran Church in the East Falls neighborhood of Philadelphia is alive, hurting in some respects, but vibrant in its ministry

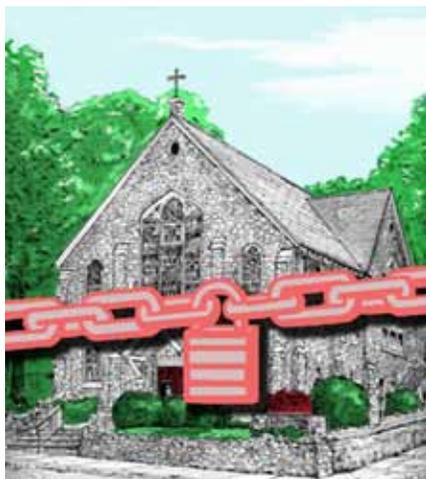
Redeemer, contrary to belief of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Lutheran Church in America, is **NOT** closed. We have been locked out of the property we purchased, built, and tended since 1909. Our congregation is 121 years old and counting.

A congregation in the ELCA is not defined by property ownership.

Redeemer challenged several actions of Bishop Burkat and Synod at the 2009 Synod Assembly. There has been no ruling by Synod Assembly on any issue except property ownership. The question presented to the Assembly (worded, at their insistence, by Synod) mentioned **ONLY the issue of property ownership** — revealing SEPA's true objective from the start.

We maintain that this vote violates SEPA's Articles of Incorporation, which forbid the Synod Assembly to vote on a congregation's property. Nevertheless, Bishop Burkat and SEPA leadership used this vote on one issue as tacit approval of all their actions regarding Redeemer—past and future.

Redeemer was denied both voice



and vote at that Assembly and each subsequent Assembly, which is a violation of Synod's own procedural rules. Synod has no authority to declare congregations closed with no discussion. This is a violation of Lutheran government.

Roberts Rules of Order, which govern Synod Assembly procedure, calls decisions invalid that were made if a voting party was denied representation. This puts into question every vote made by Synod Assembly since 2009 (including the vote regarding Redeemer's property and Bishop Burkat's re-election).

Redeemer voted unanimously to continue its ministry and has, in fact, maintained an active ministry.

- We worship weekly.
- We have faith discussions.
- We publish our own daily devotional.
- We collect offerings.
- We adopt service projects.
- We reach out to others.
- We nurture faith within our families and in our neighborhoods.
- Two retired pastors worship with us regularly. One active pastor visits with us quarterly.

We have never stopped our ministry despite the many roadblocks placed in our way by SEPA, who has coveted our property for many years. A 1998 attempt to close Redeemer and seize its property and endowment fund failed.

SEPA Synod Council took a vote to officially close Redeemer on June 10, 2010. They did so without the knowledge or involvement of Redeemer members. *We learned of this when we googled our name on the internet.*

SEPA Synod Council has no constitutional authority to vote to close a congregation without input from church members. Their actions in East Falls set precedent that many SEPA congregations may face one day soon.

We are sending this report to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to protest this errant practice. We have asked the ELCA to look into the questionable practices of Bishop Claire Burkat and SEPA Synod, but they have been unresponsive. Bishop Hanson responded only once in 2008, telling us of his regard for Bishop Burkat and instructing us *and SEPA* to negotiate.

This has never happened.

It is never too late to do the right thing.

Redeemer Today

We concentrate on Redeemer as it exists today.

PARISH STATISTICS

As a congregation with no pastor and no building we cannot report the usual statistics. But we do have some numbers that reveal the state of our ministry.

Since we were locked out in 2009:

- One member died.
- One member married.
- Our children have continued to grow without a church to attend.
- Our preschoolers are in elementary school.
- Our elementary students are in middle school.
- Our middle school students are in high school or recently graduated.
- One of our members who was in high school when the conflict began, graduated from college and has returned to Philadelphia.
- Several of the Redeemer faithful had hospital stays, one quite lengthy. Two or three were life-threatening but health was restored, thank God.
- We care for one another. A retired pastor helps.

Our congregational makeup:

- We still have one member who is a direct descendant of a charter member. Otherwise, all but three adults joined Redeemer within the last 13 years.
- Our African members (majority membership) were intimidated by Bishop Burkat's actions and feared this conflict might affect their visas and work papers. We are still in touch with many of them, but understand their fear of the Church.
- Very few of our members have joined other churches. We know of only one. Most of our 82 members are unchurched, have involved themselves in Christian activities without church membership or remain active with Redeemer.
- Finances: We have no property or pastor and little need for money. Our offerings ably support our ministry.

We had adjusted to the absence of pastoral leadership long before this conflict began. In our own worship, we use the sermons of Vincent Gerhardy of Australia, who posts his sermons a few days ahead of Sunday. They are always very

scriptural and have a gentle voice that our people find comforting. His consistent voice helps bind us together theologically.

The members of Redeemer minister to one another and take this responsibility seriously.

We continued to meet **locally** but we reach **globally**.

We remain faithful, active and ready to resume our ministry, *(including repayment of the disputed debt which can be managed with the use of our property as planned all along by the congregation)* with or without the recognition of other congregations.

See page 8, to view our web statistics which are a large part of our ministry today.

Three Easters (waiting for the stone to be rolled away)

We have made it our custom to gather in front of our locked church on Easter morning before heading elsewhere to worship. One year, perhaps the stone will be rolled away. The first year (2010) we actually had visitors who were flabbergasted that we could not enter the church. They were new to East Falls from Ecuador and were seeking a Lutheran church. Their presence allowed us to boast that a native of every inhabited continent was present that morning. We held our service right there on the noisy sidewalk. (Keep in mind that all present do not pose for photos. There is a fear factor.) We brought flowers to our second Easter of exclusion (2011). We gave several to passersby who were excited to see that we were "open" and asked to join us. It was cold in 2012, so we kept our gathering short. Easter breakfast and worship awaited us at a nearby home. Note: Bishop Burkat had our sign taken down in an attempt to rob us of our identity. It will keep coming back thanks to Photoshop!





2X2 FOUNDATION

Redeemer focuses most of its ministry activities using the entity **2x2 Foundation**. We are currently filing for tax exempt status.

Without our property, we took our ministry online.

The focus of the ministry was to help other **Small Church Ministries** with ministry ideas, strategies and resources. Anyone can view or take part in 2x2virtualchurch.com.

Our experimental ministry, still in its infancy, is ground-breaking and fascinating. As we learn more about ministries in other places, both in America and abroad, we are realizing that the future of the church need not rely on denominational hierarchies. In fact, hierarchical thinking is probably crippling ministry in today's fast-changing world. Much of every church's resources and energy is focused on maintaining and validating its structure (which is outdated). This steals dollars and energy from ministry and redefines the relationships congregations are supposed to have with their clergy and regional entities.

This is key to understanding the Redeemer experience: A cash-strapped synod put its hierarchical needs above a member church's ministry. When the Redeemer conflict began, this small congregation had more liquid assets than SEPA Synod. But SEPA Synod (running an annual six-figure deficit) had more power — if it ignored its Articles of Incorporation.

Here is a report of our activities since Sunday, September 27, 2009, the date Rev. Patricia Davenport remembered to keep the Sabbath holy by coming to Redeemer to oversee the changing of the locks. Only the church organist showed up that Sunday morning. Our members anticipated her coming and met for worship elsewhere.

The report reveals that Redeemer is not and was not a dying congregation as the trustees depicted to Synod Assembly in 2008 and 2009.

LITIGATION

SEPA Synod sued Redeemer Lutheran Church and two individual members long before any appeal of its actions could be heard within the Church. This created a bias for the Synod Assembly vote. *(Perhaps the drafters of the ELCA Articles of Incorporation recognized that Synods could be swayed by self-interest and that's why they didn't give Synods power to vote on individual congregational property.)*

We are in the fifth year of legal maneuvering with no end in site and no attempt to negotiate peacefully (as Bishop Hanson recommended in 2008 and which is scripturally mandated).

During the first year of this conflict, Redeemer wrote a monthly letter to Bishop Burkat, copying Bishop Hanson and key synodical figures. Each letter proposed peaceful solutions to the conflict which would satisfy any legitimate ministry concerns. Our letters were ignored. *They can be viewed on our web site.*

Since litigation was the chosen method of "working" with us, we have taken every step necessary to protect our rights in the court process. We will continue to do so.

We are disappointed that the first judge chose not to hear the case, ruling that he had no jurisdiction. This kicked the issues back to the Synod which had already proven that they cannot give unbiased attention to congregational issues.

An appeal of this judge's decision, resulted in a split decision in the Pa Appeals Court. The majority upheld the position that the secular courts do not have jurisdiction in church matters. A dissenting opinion noted that if the law is applied, Redeemer's arguments have merit and should be heard. Their opinion followed Redeemer's arguments to the letter.

Our warning to other congregations is this. We assumed in taking our stand that the law **did** apply. Wouldn't you? If the law doesn't apply and the Synod can do anything it pleases, every congrega-

tion is vulnerable and must make ministry decisions with the Synod's interests in mind. This is not Lutheran polity. It is difficult for congregations to do mission when they must watch over their shoulders for the whims of distant and changing leadership. Our constitutions were written so that congregations have the power to make important decisions about their ministry and their property without this concern.

This court decision changes Lutheran polity — and Lutherans never had a say!

In a recent court hearing, the judge admonished Synod lawyers. He told them: This was not a slam dunk for you. The Appeals Court was divided on this. They [Redeemer] were doing what they thought was right. And two judges agreed with them.

Why can't our own brothers and sisters in Christ recognize that?

There are still many legal hurdles to cross and Redeemer will continue to stand for what we believe is right. We may never benefit, but we hope other congregations will.

There are other cases under consideration in the court which may change the playing field. We watch them carefully.

We have the support of several other congregations (none of them ELCA). One of them is much smaller than Redeemer. They weathered an ELCA synodical takeover attempt. **Their** Synod Assembly supported the congregation. They have since left the ELCA. They have made it their mission to help other threatened congregations. We are grateful to know that there are congregations willing to take a stand with us.

The Bible Tells Us So . . .

1 Corinthians 6:1-20 ESV

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, ...

1 Corinthians 6:7

To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

Hebrews 13:5

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

James 4:17

So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Colossians 3:13

Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

1 Corinthians 6:12

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything.

WE can't stop this. Synod sued our individual members which forces us to defend ourselves. Even if our pastor and every other member of the congregation walks away, some of us must defend.

We will always be disappointed that our sister congregations (many of them no bigger or richer than Redeemer) have maintained silence, allowing the continued abuse of our congregation when there have always been peaceful alternatives.

We are and always have been willing to work with the synod — **not take orders—work with.** We are reasonable people who know our neighborhoods. Even Bishop Burkat in a recent letter to clergy recognized that Redeemer has a passion for mission.

The courts kicked this back to the Church. SEPA congregations have a say. They don't have to watch in silence.



The Old Academy Theater has graciously granted us space to meet. We return the favor with occasional theater parties which draw Redeemer members who fear coming to church while hateful litigation hangs over our head. At our theater party this month, some of our teens encountered one another for the first time in three years. They forsook an Eagles game, watched three hours of Shakespeare and gathered afterwards for a long gabfest.

WITNESS and OUTREACH

Maintaining a Local Presence

Redeemer has maintained its profile in East Falls with involvement in local organizations, including the Community Council and The Old Academy.

The Old Academy Theater was the birthplace of every church in East Falls. Redeemer met there prior to completion of its building at Midvale and Conrad in 1909. They have graciously allowed us to use their clubhouse for worship once a month and their auxiliary hall for our social events.

We always follow our local worship with fellowship hour. For the first two years, we held our fellowship where we worshiped. A few months ago we decided to begin frequenting local restaurants after



Redeemer placed two entries in the East Falls Chili Cook-Off. We didn't win but the local newspaper mentioned a Redeemer recipe for its unique ingredients — some tricks we learned from our multicultural heritage. Wait till next year!

worship to better make our presence in the community known.

At Christmastime, after hearing a children's sermon at St. Michael's, Unionville, Pa., which included a reading of *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*, we held a **Whoville Party**. (Dr. Suess was a Lutheran at one point.) It seemed to be in keeping with our experience. At the time we were marking the third year of being locked out of our church on Christmas Eve. Redeemer members, family and friends, some community members and Old Academy members attended. One of our members created large Whoville posters to decorate the hall. We think we will repeat it this year, closer to Christmas. Our web post about this party gets a good bit of traffic from people looking for ideas for a Whoville Party — all year round!

We posted our original recipe for Green Eggs and Ham Soup.

To show our appreciation to the Old Academy, we held several **theater parties**. These have been great



Our first social event for the community was our January project. Our Whoville Party was held at the Old Academy which has graciously given us rent-free space for worship and activities.

socials as members who are afraid to attend church have attended. We look forward to these opportunities to reconnect with our friends, whom we once saw weekly in church.

We filled a pew at the **East Falls Community Council Meeting** where Rev. Patricia Davenport made a presentation to solicit ideas for the use of Redeemer's property. (She never asked us!)

Our neighbors, some of whom were active in Redeemer-sponsored activities, showed some reticence about becoming involved. The first idea presented was to make that corner a doggie park. Another thought it should be made into senior housing because seniors don't drive and park cars. (But the people who care for them and visit them do!). A third advocated for a school or arts program — both had been part of Redeemer's ministry.

Rev. Davenport stated several times that SEPA wants a "word and sacrament church" on the site with no explanation of why they evicted their own people in the process.

Creating a Global Witness 2x2virtualchurch.com

As part of 2x2 Foundation, we sponsor a web site dedicated to helping **Small Church Ministries**. This was an experiment that slowly took on a life of its own. It now has worldwide involvement. We reach more people each week than ever before in our 121-year ministry.

The site was launched in February 2011. We had only a few visitors per month through that fall. By September we were posting content daily. Things began to happen.

As of September 15, 2012, we have reached more than 10,000 unique viewers. We now have 1100+ unique views each month. We are averaging 250-350 reads per week with a growing daily readership. In addition 110 followers read our site daily via email feed.

Interaction with our readers is just beginning. People are starting to comment and "like" articles. It is interesting that those who take the time to comment or like a post are often young professionals (20-30ish) and represent many countries.

We invite congregations to "support" us. This is not monetary support. It simply means sharing ministry ideas and staying in touch.

One local church, four churches in **Kenya** and one in **Pakistan** and **Malawi** are in contact regularly. This month a missionary team in northern **Sweden** wrote telling us they follow 2x2 and enjoy our content.

We strive to be as engaged as possible with these congregations in a personal way.

We sent an MP3 recording of a children's song to a pastor in a remote region of Kenya. He and his wife have taken in war and AIDS orphans. He reports to us regularly and thanks us repeatedly for sending the recording. He says his children love the song and sing it every week. His wife sent us handmade jewelry.

Another church leader in Nairobi wrote to us looking for Vacation Bible School materials. We doubted we could help, but we asked questions. We were surprised to learn that he was planning for 250 children. We pointed him to some free online resources. He was so thankful that the pastor invited us to "speak" at a weekend children's revival. We sent a message and included the song *Jesus Loves Me* in both English and Swahili. Redeemer has a large membership who speaks Swahili and we often sang hymns in both languages.

The children wrote back:

We love you and next we need to have so that we can play together and to teach us new song. God bless our lovely Dad Silas to give us a new teacher from outside our country. We love you and Silas. We are hoping to hear more greetings from you and Dad Silas. Dad has promised we are going soon to have you and your team? Next we have requested to visit our fellow children called CHARITY HOME CHILDREN, Pray for our DAD SILAS,
Bye Bye Bye

Their pastor encouraged us to offer a daily devotion. We began this month (September 2012).

Another church in **Pakistan** faces many challenges as a minority religion in a turbulent region. Their pastor sends regular reports of youth outreach and mission visits

to the countryside. He asked us to send him a particular study Bible to help him in his ministry. Redeemer members voted to use some of their offerings for this. He wrote recently that the film which sparked violence in the Arab world has also affected Christians in Pakistan. We contacted each 2x2 supporting church and prayer vigils were held.

We are now helping two of these churches develop web sites for their ministry.

This signals a departure from the way congregations interacted in mission. Once, we had to rely on centralized offices to train ministers to speak a foreign language and acclimate families to another culture. A congregation's only

engagement was to give offerings or sponsor a particular mission worker. The internet and the nearly universal understanding of English makes it possible for congregations to interact with Christians and seekers anywhere directly.

In recent weeks, we began connecting the leaders of mission efforts. With their permission we wrote letters of introduction. They took the ball and ran. **A conference is being planned**, headed by the Nairobi church. 2x2 (Redeemer) was invited to keynote.

Our web ministry shows enormous potential. It has led us to other ministries as well.

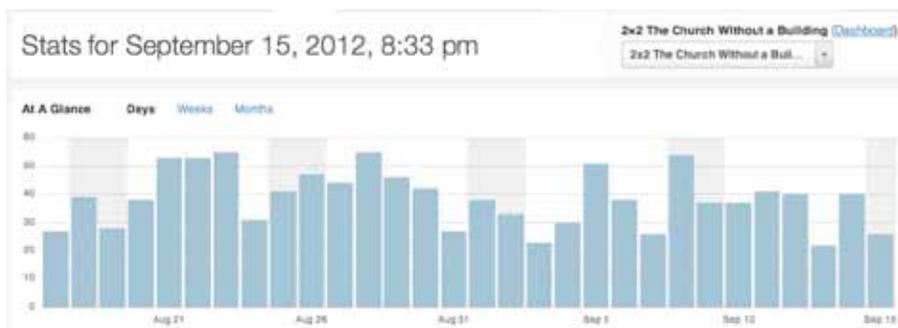
We commented on an object lesson delivered by a pastor at Trinity, Fort Washington. That small post began attracting search engine traffic. We began to feature **object lessons** on our web site. This was a weekly part of our worship at Redeemer, so we are simply resuming part of our ministry for a new audience.

Our object lessons are designed for adults with interaction with the entire congregation. They are not word-for-word "sermons." They are starter ideas. We post these lessons on Tuesdays and have found that Tuesdays and Wednesdays are usually strong readership days.

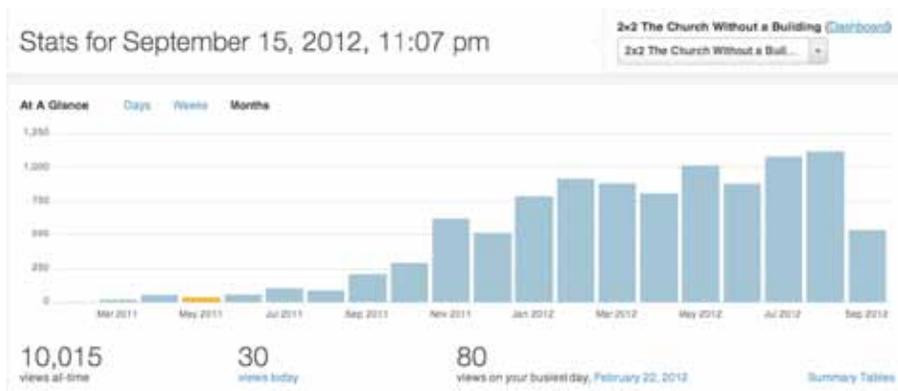
We have no way of measuring how many congregations are preaching 2x2 Object Lessons each week. We know that more than 150 church leaders look for it weekly.

We knew nothing about social media when we started our web site, but we learned quickly. We engaged with experts who willingly shared their expertise. Soon we were sharing our new-found expertise, promoting **Social Media Ministry**.

We were alarmed that 35 SEPA congregations within 15 miles of Redeemer have no VBS and many have no Sunday School. We started writing about this. We connected with a college student in Texas whose personal ministry is collecting and refurbishing used Vacation Bible School Materials and distributing them to small congregations who cannot afford new materials. We posted a link on our site. She gets several referrals a week. We put together a program to make



Our web stats have peaks and valleys, but over all they inch steadily higher. The Olympics were a challenge! One Olympic week was the only week in two months that we dropped below 200 (185) and we had several weeks in that period over 300. We are able to see what attracts readers. Our series on JOY in worship drew our strongest response ever! Above are our daily stats. Below are our monthly stats. The last figure is mid-month. By September 30, we had reached our highest average daily readership, surpassing August.



sure every congregation can have a Bible School, but it is hard to implement when we are scrutinized as enemies. **www.vbsaid.com**

Two seminaries (non-Lutheran) have referenced our blog for student discussion and assignments.

A series we intend to expand on multicultural ministry was re-blogged by a church in Texas.

We created an **editorial mix** on the web site. We try to offer content on our areas of experience which include experimental and experien-

tial worship, multicultural ministry, social media ministry, and leadership concepts. We also comment on other web sites and ministry news in our area.

A goal of many blogs is to get people to comment and collect "likes" to bolster their "clout."

We used none of these techniques. Our only strategy—**create and add useful content.**

Next step: Add video and podcasts.

If our numbers continue to grow at the current rate, we will reach more than 20,000 next year.

SEPA, who always looks for the worst from Redeemer, testified in court that 2x2 solicits funds for Redeemer's defense. This is one of many intentional misconstructions of our ministry. We address SEPA's forbidden subject editorially, but we do not seek funds. There is no mechanism for collecting money on 2x2virtualchurch.com. There never has been! It is simply our mission voice.

REDEEMER AMBASSADORS

After ten months of imposed isolation, one Redeemer member commented in frustration, "I just don't understand why they want a church without us in it." We decided to visit churches in search of an answer. Four of us and occasionally a few more travel two or three times a month to visit other congregations.

We established just a few guidelines which we discussed during the car ride to our first visit in August 2010.

- We would visit to worship, learn and share.
- We would talk about ourselves only if asked (and only about a third do!).
- We would place a letter in the offering plate as a way to communicate with church members in a manner that they could take or leave, as they please.

To date we have visited about 50 congregations. After a few visits, we realized we have a unique advantage. Most congregational members rarely visit other congregations and have little idea of what their fellow Christians are doing. We share our observations in a regularly updated report that is available online.

We do not present these reports as comprehensive analyses. We know that our visits represent one morning/one service, in a congregation's life. We do, however, attempt to learn as much as we can.

We do not set out to be critical of any ministry. We love seeing strengths. In doing so, we recall that all the other congregations in SEPA felt qualified to judge our congregation without making ANY visits to Redeemer and knowing nothing but what Synod told them about our ministry (and they hadn't visited either). This foolishness, which we hope is never repeated, is the only reason we are free to take on this project. If we were not locked out of the Lutheran Church we would be busy ministering in our neighborhood just like every other congregation.

Our Ambassadors have come to look forward to our visits, but **we'd rather be worshipping at home.**

A list follows of the congregations we have visited and a short note on each. **Fuller reports are on our web site. We present them as part of our mission to share.**

We still don't have an answer to the question that sparked the Ambassadors: **Why does SEPA want a church without us in it?**



August 9, 2010

PRINCE OF PEACE, PLYMOUTH MEETING

This was our first visit. After 10 months of being locked out of church, we were nervous! But PoP was welcoming and we have remained active with them on several projects. We are helping them with web promotion of a new initiative.



August 16, 2010

UNIVERSITY CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

This was our second visit. We chose this church because the internet listed their pastor as our acting dean. We enjoyed a traditional service and a fellowship meal, but the acting dean showed no interest in Redeemer. We enjoyed conversation with a few members. One claimed to have visited Redeemer and started telling us about our church and neighborhood. He didn't get much right but we had fun correcting him.



August 22, 2010

BETHANY, ROXBOROUGH

Redeemer's neighbor to the West. Bethany has a beautiful sanctuary which seats 600 on pews they are proud to call "comfortable." On our August visit, we worshipped in an air-conditioned chapel with about 25 members and another visitor. This older congregation with good spirit and heart for mission inspired our VBS-aid idea. They are land-locked on a back street, but their rowhouse neighborhood is teeming with young families. We left thinking of ways they might connect with their neighborhood without closing the church down and evicting faithful, elderly supporters. One of our ambassadors noticed that the church's ladies room had no mirror. She bought one at a yard sale and delivered it to Bethany. Several ambassadors commented they could consider joining Bethany. Unfortunately, the pastor welcomed us by reporting our visit to the bishop. It did not bother us that he reported (we've sent reports to the bishop ourselves). But would we join a church where the pastor tattled?



September 12, 2010

ST. JOHN, MORRISVILLE

We had hoped to catch up with our member Pastor Mutashoby who was interim pastor here, but we were too late. We encountered a special service to call a new pastor, who had just left a church that shut down under his interim leadership. We didn't stay for the service that had started earlier than their web site stated, but we were given the bulletin by the ushers. In the new pastor's bio, he blamed the people for the failure of his previous parish. We were disappointed to miss Pastor Mutashoby who had served Redeemer for seven months, overseeing the new membership of 49. While he was working with us, he was never able to reach anyone in the synod office. Suddenly, he was asked to meet with Rev. Davenport. He never returned to Redeemer even to say good-bye. Voilà! He landed an assignment in SEPA's northern frontier.



September 19, 2010

HOLY TRINITY, ABINGTON

We visited this congregation as they were in the process of leaving the ELCA. We shared with them how we had requested to leave and were told we couldn't leave because we were terminated, violating the constitutional provision for congregations. Both pastors met with members of our church later in the week. They have since successfully joined the NALC. Bishop Claire Burkat was an associate pastor here for five years before joining Synod staff.

October 10, 2010 and several other times
OLD ZION, BROAD ST, PHILADELPHIA



Old Zion has been very supportive of Redeemer and we enjoyed our visit to their church. One ambassador encountered a friend from college campus ministry and returned later in the week to attend her mother's funeral. Redeemer members have

attended several special events at Old Zion. Old Zion members have attended some of the court hearings with us and some of our fundraisers.

October 17, 2010

ATONEMENT, FISHTOWN

This congregation has lots of personality and is very representative of their neighborhood. We participated in a baptism. Pastor recently moved on and they had an old friend of the congregation as interim. We



especially enjoyed seeing a dog in church and it wasn't St. Francis Sunday! It was the first dog we encountered at worship, but not the last! They expressed sympathy upon our losing our church. We told them we didn't lose our church, it was taken from us.

REFORMATION SUNDAY

GOOD SHEPHERD, KING OF PRUSSIA



We visited on Reformation Sunday and witnessed the confirmation of about six young people, who led much of the service. Three ministers were in the chancel, including the bishop of NEPA Synod, whose granddaughter

was among those confirmed. One of the pastors who worked with the youth was a frequent supply to Redeemer and former work colleague of one our ambassadors. It was a special celebratory day for them. We did not interrupt their revelry.



The largest church we visited is a new **Presbyterian** church in the Fairmount neighborhood. We worshipped with 200+ young people (ages 25-35), a demographic largely missing in our Lutheran visits. liberti presbyterian has three churches in Philadelphia and two home churches meeting in OUR neighborhood, while Lutherans fiddle around with "what to do" with Lutheran property and attack one another.



**November 14, 2010 and a few weeks later
TRINITY, GERMANTOWN**

Redeemer's neighbor to the North. We made several visits to Trinity and encountered more than 50 in worship. They worship in a ground floor chapel. They have no pastor but their lay leadership is enthusiastic and creative in their leadership. At one service there were a good number of children and youth but fewer at our second visit. They used a programed synthesizer to accompany hymns. Trinity has no pastor and has for some time relied on lay speakers with a pastor visiting once a month. This arrangement seemed to suit the congregation. We recognized a pastor in the congregation who was once a Redeemer member and still lives in the Falls. This congregation was once home to many professional leaders employed at the Muhlenberg Building, the old LCA headquarters. The church merger in the 1980s affected its membership, but it seems to be finding its way. We had good conversations with several members or attendees. One had been a member at Epiphany, Roxborough, and expressed outrage at how they had been treated by SEPA. Trinity seems to be working hard at reaching out to the immediate neighborhood and our two visits suggest that they are experiencing success.

**November 21, 2010
ST. MARK, CONSHOCKEN**



This church was founded by the grandfather and great grandfather of two of our ambassadors, so our visit had special meaning. Their pastor was away. We enjoyed good lay-led worship including a

small choir. The sermon was delivered by a school teacher member. We were given a gracious tour of the building, much of it added since our ancestor's time. We left a special memorial gift in memory of our relatives who worshiped here, circa 1900.

**November 28, 2010
CHRIST, NORTH PHILADELPHIA**

Redeemer's neighbor to the East. We experienced an upbeat worship service led by Pastor Watkins and an inspiring choir. One of our ambassadors thought she recognized the pastor from the radio and called later in the week to inquire if she was correct.



Pastor Watkins is one of only three pastors who contacted us after our visit. He confirmed that he once had a radio program. The congregation was primarily African American but there was an Asian family sitting near us. Pastor Watkins "taught" the service, explaining every action as the service progressed. They were one of several congregations that had an altar call for special prayer.

**December 19, 2010
ST. JOHN, MELROSE PARK**



Advent is a tough season for us since it was the busiest season in our congregation with many beloved memories of favorite traditions. We visited

this church just before Christmas. The pastor gave a children's sermon with puppets that was very well done. The children and a good number of adults left after this part of the sermon. We heard a short rehearsal of a children's choir, preparing for Christmas. There was a Temple Talk by an administrator of a Lutheran Social Service Agency in the city. We enjoyed the open house and had many good conversations with members and staff. The pastor told us he knew all about Redeemer's history. We asked a few questions. He didn't know as much as the thought.

**January 9, 2011
ZION, FLOURTOWN**

It was a cold and blustery day and we took no photo. The service was warm and cozy. The pastor used interactive techniques and we engaged in the discussion. The children's sermon was a scripted puppet show with a lay person helping out. The congregation was preparing for an after-church theater party, so we spoke only briefly to the pastor. They, like Redeemer, have an all summer day-school.

**January 16, 2011
ST. TIMOTHY, FOX CHASE**



We participated in another baptism, a young boy from their day school. The congregation appeared to be no bigger than

Redeemer. Like Redeemer, they have a day care program. There were very few children in worship. There was a nursery mentioned, but we didn't see children during the post-church fellowship either. We have noticed, in general, that for all the churches with day care programs, there do not seem to be children in worship.

**February 20, 2011
ZION, OLNEY**



This small congregation is also very close to Redeemer. They have a large plant which they use for a day school. They rent their sanctuary to a Baptist congregation

and use a chapel at the far end of the building for Lutheran-style worship. They have an interim pastor and we encountered an East Fallser playing their organ. They had an interim pastor when we visited. The congregation was a good mix of ages. A new Ambassador came with us. It was her first return to church since the lockdown—more than a year! One of our ambassadors returned for a second visit for a festival service.

**February 27, 2011
ST. MICHAEL, GERMANTOWN**

St. Michael's is known for its diversity but it was no more diverse than Redeemer. The service reflected little diversity—people of different colors but not particularly



diverse. They were using a side hall for worship. Worship included about 30 but included two pastors, a vicar and a seminarian -- a very high ratio of professional leadership especially when contrasted with their neighboring congregation, Trinity, that has no pastor and a larger number in attendance, at least at the two services we attended there.

At this point, we have visited all the nearest churches to Redeemer. SEPA's notion—that they can close churches and members will be seamlessly absorbed by another church—is folly. Our neighboring churches don't appear to be any stronger than Redeemer. Without Redeemer's stand, they might have already fallen prey to Synod's maneuvering, as did Grace, Epiphany and others — before Synod encountered Redeemer. Synod stated in court that Redeemer is the first of six congregations they plan to close this way. The other problem is that each congregation is appropriately serving their neighborhood. We are not part of their neighborhoods and would always be outsiders. Redeemer believes that East Falls is deserving of a neighborhood church, governed by neighborhood Lutherans. We are dedicated to continuing to be a Lutheran presence in East Falls, where we have been for 121 years.

**March 12, 2011
GRACE, NORRISTOWN**



Our Ambassadors were few in number on this winter day but we enjoyed a service with impressive music. There were many children in worship.



**March 20, 2011
GRACE, DREXEL HILL**

We visited on a beautiful spring day. A new interim pastor preached to a group no larger than a Redeemer service. They had just said good-bye to a retiring pastor who had served them for many years.



**April 17, 2011
ST. PETERS, WEST OAK LANE**

The service apparently started well before the time noted on their web site as we ran into the Palm Sunday parade as we arrived. The three-hour service had one of the best attendances of our visits — about 100. A bit hard to tell as people were moving about quite a bit. Good choirs, including our first children's choir during worship. Palm Sunday was always an important celebration at Redeemer, so we missed being with our people.



**May 8, 2011
PRINCE OF PEACE, LAWNCREST**

This church was very like Redeemer in its outreach ministry. Their fairly new pastor seemed to be conscientious about greeting immigrants to the neighborhood and infusing elements from other cultures into the service. We sat with a row of older ladies who gave a blow by blow account of everything that was going on. It was fun. It

was Mother's Day. We are always reminded of Mother's Day 2009 when Synod representatives came to our worship and attempted to commandeer our worship.

**June 19, 2011
GRACE, MANTUA**

Our Father's Day visit to Grace, Mantua, was very enjoyable. Worship was spirited and although the service was two hours long, even the children remained engaged. The leaders had a way of making the service meaningful to each individual within the group. They had an altar call for one-on-one prayer with one of about four worship leaders. Fathers were called forward and honored. One of our ambassadors commented on leaving, "I could join that church!"



**June 28, 2011
FAITH, WOODHAVEN ROAD**

We missed the service because the web site had the wrong time. For the first time we went together for fellowship at a local diner. We have since made this a custom.

**July 24, 2011
IMMANUEL, BURHOLME**



It was a scorcher and the air conditioning was broken, but the Holy Spirit came down upon about five infants and children who were baptized. The interim minister rushed through the service cutting back on the music to get

people out of the heat, but it wasn't so bad. Redeemer was not spoiled by air conditioning. One member gave us a tour and found that one of our ambassadors knew a good bit about their history and actually recognized one of their furnishings from a home she had once visited. One ambassador thought she might know the pastor's husband from youth ministry days, but we couldn't find her after the service to ask. We noted that this congregation recently called a pastor.

**July 31, 2011
ST. JOHN, FOLCROFT**



We had a surprise at this church. Over coffee, we discovered that one of their members had been college friends with one

of our ambassadors and his wife. Both had been members of the Gettysburg Choir. They were saying good-bye to their interim minister who was leaving to go to Grace, Drexel Hill, where we had visited a few weeks before.

**August 14, 2011
HARTWICK SEMINARY, NY
and HOLY COMMUNION, PHILADELPHIA**

The Ambassadors split up today to accommodate vacations. Two visited Hartwick Seminary near Cooperstown, New York, where a first Lutheran Seminary once prepared pastors to serve the New York frontier, including mission work with the Mohawk Indians. These two ambassadors were somewhat familiar with this church as their family has vacationed here for six generations. It was our first return in more than 20 years. It was always a small congregation, but we found it to be very much alive. An AIM led the service and we learned that they share a pastor with several other small congregations in the county. They seemed to know a lot about their sister churches and were planning a joint picnic. They were stunned at our situation with our synod as they assumed land takeovers were not part of Lutheran government.

Meanwhile, two ambassadors visited Holy Communion in Philadelphia's Center City. One of our ambassadors was active in this church for many years, often singing in their choir in the summer months. This is also the home church of Bishop Burkat (although she might be considered to be among their scattered or diminished membership as she lives in Ambler). As fate would have it, Bishop Burkat was sitting a few pews in front of her "enemies," which made for an interesting communion.



**August 21, 2011
CHRIST, UPPER DARBY**

This congregation is also known for diversity and in fact sits in the middle of one of the area's most diverse neighborhoods. Their approach to diversity seemed to differ from ours. Redeemer incorporated the customs and languages of its new members. The service we attended at Christ was mainstream Lutheran all the way.

**Fuller descriptions of our visits,
especially our most recent visits,
are on our web site.**

2x2virtualchurch.com

*To find a church, just type the
neighborhood or church name in the
on site SEARCH box near the top of the
right column.*



September 11, 2011
TRINITY, FORT WASHINGTON

We looked forward to seeing former Redeemer members from many years ago on our visit. We found a friendly congregation who was comfortable in their busy ministry and enjoying a new pastor. The pastor took a few minutes at the end of the service to do a “brown bag” sermon with the adults who were very appreciative. We wrote about this on our web site. That post has drawn a great deal of search engine traffic—so much that we started a weekly object lesson feature, which continues to attract readers. One of the ambassadors was familiar with this pastor’s home congregation near York, where her ancestors were active in the 1700s. We found that the new pastor knew her third and fifth-grade teacher who is still a member of that church.

September 18, 2011
ST. MICHAEL’S, KENSINGTON



This was the friendliest congregation we visited with almost every member taking the time to stop and talk with us. Their pastor was away, but very capable lay leadership made for a fine service. They have built a well-appointed ground floor chapel and

are dismantling their large second-floor sanctuary which is expensive to maintain.



October 9, 2011
TEMPLE, HAVERTOWN

We encountered Former Bishop Michael Merkel who was just beginning an interim ministry at this church who had just said good-bye to their pastor of seven years. We attended the contemporary service. Pastor Merkel was the last bishop who actually worked with Redeemer, despite claims of his successors. Of all the churches we visited, this congregation seemed to be in closest touch with its neighborhood, including other churches. We were not surprised weeks later to discover that they have a higher Facebook ranking than some of the larger churches using Facebook to communicate with members.



October 16 and 23, 2011
ST. MATTHEW’S, SPRINGFIELD

We visited this church two weeks in a row. One Sunday was Stewardship Sunday. We listened to a lay leader describe a Stewardship Drive that would enable property renovation. It was very similar to Redeemer’s Stewardship Drive. Plans to renovate our facilities, scaled almost exactly to our differing memberships. Redeemer’s membership was growing dramatically. St. Matthew’s has been holding its own over the last three years. The latest TREND report indicates the giving has improved in the last year.

October 30, 2011
AUGUSTUS, TRAPPE



The Ambassadors were happy to spend Reformation Sunday in this church where some of our Ambassadors have family ties with one of its prominent former president — LCA leader, Franklin Clark Fry. This holiday visit

was the best attended church of any of our visits and included a large number of children, which is rare. We stopped to visit the Muhlenberg Exhibit at Berman Museum, Ursinus College. A friend of Redeemer was involved in its creation.

November 13, 2011
ST. PETER’S, NORTH WALES



Another Stewardship Sunday—this time celebrated in grand style with a guest speaker and pot luck dinner after church. During worship we enjoyed an anthem with combined choirs that incorporated a Swahili song we used

every week in our worship but had not heard since we were locked out. We were invited to stay for the luncheon and were impressed that the pastor rolled up his sleeves and served the food. This pastor had a way of connecting with every worshiper despite a good crowd present for the special day. We ate lunch with a new Synod staff member, who was leading a Korean outreach.



November 20 and 27, 2011
ST. MICHAEL, UNIONVILLE / LUTHER HOUSE

We visited this church twice. The first time we were late so we went to visit a nearby Lutheran Retirement Home that the church serves. A friend of Redeemer lives there and had told us about the congregation. This congregation has many impressive projects. We heard a son of the congregation discuss his mission work. We spoke with an official greeter who told us of their new web site. The associate pastor gave a children’s sermon which incorporated a reading from *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*. We discussed this on the ride home and the seed that was planted became our Whoville Party—our January project.



December 11, 2011
ST. PAUL’S, LANSDOWNE

This is one of several Lutheran churches within a short radius, each serving a distinct neighborhood. Our trip to this congregation was notable in that their pastor was the only pastor in all our visits to write to our congregation after our visit. We enjoyed their contemporary praise band, Covenant, and the choir which included a good number of the congregation. The Klezmer-style anthem made good use of the band’s clarinets.

December 18, 2011
GRACE, BROOMALL



We visited this church on the day they were decorating the church for Christmas Eve. We were preparing for our third Christmas Eve

without a church to decorate.

**February 19, 2012
ST. PAUL'S, ARDMORE**



The most impressive thing about our visit to this suburban church was its effort to welcome newcomers. They had a welcome station right by the entrance with greeters meeting you. As we left we

were offered a mug filled with candy. It was clear that their effort included a plan to engage visitors beyond that but we told them we were not from the neighborhood. It is interesting to contrast this more formal approach to evangelism by a larger church, where the responsibility to welcome was met by a few appointed members, with the small church in Kensington, where each member had adopted a welcoming habit and even a had a welcoming section built into their liturgy.

**February 26, 2012
CHRIST'S, ORELAND**

We forgot to take a picture. We enjoyed a well-attended service. A lengthy announcements preface to worship indicated they are a busy congregation. As is common in the larger churches we visit, no one spoke to us outside of worship.



**March 11, 2012
TRINITY, MANOA**

We were waiting to visit this church until one of Ambassadors who had once served this church as a seminary intern could be with us. But we ended up visiting without him. We returned a few weeks later to show him his old haunt. He said that in recent years he had received a letter from a member that said he had been their best seminary intern ever, even though it was decades ago. We found a church that displayed a sense of joy. We were impressed that members we spoke with boasted of their youth although they were themselves removed from the youth scene. We also noticed that the choir sang with joy. When we spoke to a member after church, she spoke of what fun they had at rehearsals. The pastor spoke only to a couple of us and commented and asked why we don't just move on. Such comments, not uncommon and always from clergy, do not take into consideration that ongoing lawsuits make it impossible for us to move on—even if we thought the advice was in our and the Church's best interest.

**March 18, 2012
TABERNACLE, W. PHILA.**



We visited this congregation that has weathered its own battles, recovering from a fire which destroyed its beautiful sanctuary. They work in a newly constructed building, but the loss

clearly has taken a toll. We enjoyed good worship led by a small but capable choir and had some good conversations with members afterward.



**March 25, 2012
ST. JOHN'S, AMBLER**

We had a very enjoyable visit to the church in Bishop Burkat's neighborhood. The congregation had excellent music performed by an ensemble of several instruments and a cantor leading hymns. They were blessing teddy bears to be given to children in crisis care and announced a labyrinth prayer walk at a nearby church. We enjoyed a fellowship lunch which was followed by a lay-led Bible study which was attractive to us, but we needed to get back to our own neighborhood for afternoon activities.

**May 20, 2012
GRACE, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

One ambassador visited this Lutheran congregation in the shadow of the Alamo and was surprised to find that German Lutherans are prominent in Texas history. We sent a follow-up card to the pastor.

**July 22, 2012
RESURRECTION, HORSHAM**

It's amazing how many churches we visit — totally randomly — when their pastor is away. Our visit to this small suburban church located in a big field was still another visit to a church similar in size and worship to Redeemer. This church used a large number of hymns in worship. Redeemer, too, used as eight hymns on most Sundays.



**July 8, 2012
GRACE, WYNDMOOR**



Our Ambassadors looked forward to our visit to this church. Two of our members had been active here for five or six years. Unfortunately, we were late for worship. Their web site had

their summer service time posted correctly but we had read a page that discussed their education program that used their fall worship schedule. Even so, we were greeted by a member who recognized one ambassador. We greeted several people after worship, who asked about the now grown Redeemer boy who had attended their Sunday School. We were aware that their pastor serves on Synod Council. She made no attempt to greet us.

**July 29, 2012
ST. MATTHEW'S, WOODLYN**



We encountered a congregation very similar in size to Redeemer. In fact, one of our pastors went from us to this congregation in about 2001.

Other similarities included their day care program and their cooperation with the Catholic Archdiocese in serving lunches to children. It was a warm day, and we were reminded of our congregation's habit of sitting near the windows in the back of the church on hot days. Their members sat near an open side door.

**August 26, 2012
ST. JOHN'S, HATBORO**

Another Stewardship Sunday! This one included an impressive Temple talk about their Food Pantry ministry. We were interested in this church because our former pastor's wife had served here before the both fled the synod. It was a nice service attended by a small group of people that still managed to have every age group represented. It was one of two Sunday services. The stark architecture was a contrast to our colorful sanctuary.



**September 23, 2012
ST. MARK'S, BROAD ST., PHILADELPHIA**

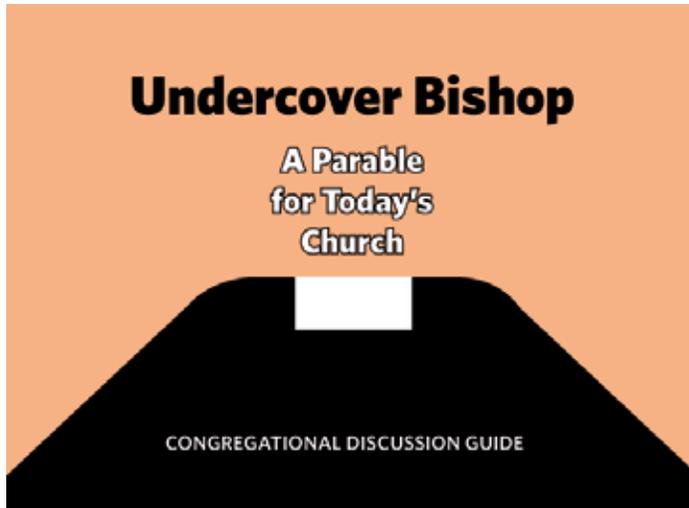
We enjoyed a long worship service with lots of hymns, the most encountered so far. The congregation was comfortable with interaction and participation. One Ambassador had attended this church 30 years before and another knew the pastor from working with the Department for Professional Leadership in the LCA. Another pastor who has served on Synod Council.



This project of Redeemer would be of little value if we did not share our findings. Some are alarming and need to be addressed, especially the absence of children. The other most notable failing of SEPA congregations is the inability to grasp the value of the web. About 31 congregations (close to 20% of SEPA congregations) have no web site. None embraced the web's ability to reach out to the neighborhood with content attractive to seekers and the unchurched. Below are some general findings from our many visits

Redeemer is not closed; we are locked out of God's House by SEPA Synod.

- + Lutheran sanctuaries are beautiful. Seven congregations we visited were not using their sanctuaries.
- + More than half of the churches we visited have no parking lot. Bishop Burkat told Redeemer, "Churches without parking lots have no chance of survival." Four of the churches we visited with the largest attendance had no parking lot. The church with the lowest attendance had a beautiful lot. Ours was the only car parked in it!
- + We have encountered only 13 worship services with more than 50 in attendance and only 3 of them with more than 100. One had 70 including the families of five children being baptized and our four ambassadors. Four had just over 50, one 80, and the largest, 180. Of the rest, 8 had about 40 and all the rest had under 30 in attendance, some well under. Some had more than one service. So did Redeemer.
- + Despite boasts of Synod diversity, most of the churches we visited have been fairly homogenous. Only three congregations had racial diversity similar to Redeemer. One other was bilingual. Redeemer is multi-lingual.
- + A surprising number of the churches we visit are or recently have been under some form of Synod-monitored leadership (mission developer, interim, or bridge.) Several, like Redeemer, relied entirely on lay leadership.
- + Overall, there are very few children attending worship, many had none—yet day schools are a favorite ministry. Almost all dismiss children before the sermon. Teens and young adults are rare. We witnessed one nice confirmation ceremony with a class of six. We have taken part in seven baptisms. Many of the congregations have many seniors. Redeemer is the opposite with many children and young adults and few seniors. Children at Redeemer are an active part of the entire worship experience.
- + We encountered few choirs (about one in four). We have now enjoyed just three children's choirs. Hymnals are rarely used. Many are printing everything in the bulletins. We found this to be the most welcoming. (Redeemer regularly referenced eight English hymnals and two Swahili hymnals, so it was a necessity for us.)
- + Most churches are not using technology to full potential. Most websites are static and dated. Only one asked for email info in their guest book. Three had not posted a change in worship time on their web site and so we missed part or all of the services.
- + Sunday fellowship varies greatly. Some have none, some have coffee and treats, some serve meals, and one congregation used fellowship time as a fundraiser.
- + Four had altar calls for laying on of healing hands.
- + One church recited its mission statement as part of the liturgy.
- + Many were not planning to offer a Summer VBS. According to TREND reports, about 36 ELCA congregations within 15 miles of Redeemer have no VBS. Redeemer had a multi-week summer program.
- + It seems the larger the congregation the less likely it is to have anyone greet us more than to say hello or welcome. Only about a third asked questions. Pastors rarely asked more than our names. Some pastors made no attempt to greet us as visitors. Two pastors telephoned after our visits.
- + One congregation responded to the letter we placed in the offering plate and invited us to come back and speak to them. Another asked us to send the information in larger print. One forwarded the information to the bishop. Others commented when we returned. (We have made several return visits.) Only one pastor wrote to us after our visit.
- + Of those that inquired about Redeemer, most seemed to be unaware of the aggressive legal tactics used by Synod against lay members. Some responded to us with empathy, but characteristically added "We just want to stay off their radar." The most frequent, almost universal, answer to the question why they supported the taking of Redeemer's property is "We didn't know." We will make sure that you know from now on!



Undercover Bishop is an entertaining parable that grew from our visits to SEPA congregations.

The plot: A fictional bishop decides to visit congregations *inognito* to find out what people won't tell a bishop face to face.

The parable focuses on three congregations—a small country church, an urban neighborhood church, and a small town church.

Although fictional in format, much of the dialog is drawn from our Ambassadors' actual conversations with SEPA congregations.

The book is available by Free Download on 2x2virtualchurch.com web site and will soon be available in Kindle format on Amazon.com.

We had a request from a reader in Australia to publish this as a Powerpoint presentation.

Challenges

Our biggest challenge is overcoming the intentionally nurtured, synod-wide prejudice against our people.

By now, it should be apparent that SEPA in its review of our ministry, limited as that was, vastly underestimated Redeemer.

Plugging a \$275,000 deficit budget justifies wearing blinders.

Without SEPA's self-interested interference, we would have a solid local worshipping community of more than 150 by now which would make us a mid-sized congregation.

SEPA has admitted in court testimony that the membership figure presented to the Assembly (13) was not true. Rev. Ray Miller, a trustee, testified in court that synod's records had us at 26 members and synod's lawyers have held us to a quorum for some 72 members in their court arguments. This manipulation of statistics is not an oversight. The Trustees Report was presented to the 2008 Assembly without it having been shared with Redeemer. (*We were expected to defend against a report we had never seen.*) Afterward, we wrote to synod a detailed list of inaccuracies. The same report, unaltered, was read before the 2009 Synod Assembly. At that point, the misrepresentations were intentional.

Question: Is a Synod Assembly vote based on false information valid?

Redeemer leaders have been loyal to the members who elected them as is constitutionally appropriate. We still call ourselves Lutherans.

The Redeemer Legacy and Impact on SEPA Congregations

The actions of SEPA Synod in the East Falls neighborhood over the last 15 years should give SEPA congregation serious pause. What has happened here can so easily happen between any congregation and its regional body. In fact, that is SEPA's intention. SEPA sent their lawyer to Chicago to teach all synods their methodology.

A legacy is being created.

Redeemer members will always remember the broken promises, partial and whole untruths, and the deceit employed from the very first encounter with synod representatives. This includes trustees who came to us (without identifying themselves as trustees) with pledges to help, but who abused our trust to make it all the easier to acquire our property. It also includes a bishop who brought a lawyer and locksmith to meetings with the congregation. We will remember trustees who came unannounced to Sunday worship, walked to the front of the sanctuary, and created a confrontation. We will remember court servers showing up at our council meetings and at our homes.

We will remember that every strategy for divisiveness was employed — including trying to divide our church along racial lines.

We will remember the cowardice of clergy and the willingness of both clergy and other congregations to accept, and thereby support, horrific behavior towards our people.

Five years of relentless hatefulness will be difficult for SEPA to overcome. The good within the Church's power will be all the more difficult because of its failures in East Falls.

We can begin with forgiveness and work for atonement and reconciliation, but there seems to be little interest in any of these concepts in Southeastern Pennsylvania—unless it comes easily and only after total victory.

Legacies can be changed. But it is work — Gospel-mandated work. For good or bad, the legacy will outlive Redeemer—and SEPA.

Redeemer is still very much alive and willing to undertake the challenge. Any takers?