

Monday, January 25, 2021

Dear Beloved Community, *(I know this letter is a little long----but it is important---PLEASE READ!)*

On Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, we will have our Annual Meeting. This is a gathering that both denominations require in order to take care of the necessary “business” of being the church. Since we are a covenanted partnership of two churches and two denominations, this means we have some shared business, but also business to which each of the two churches must separately attend. We are not simply a local faith community, but a community that is actually bound to two national denominations (the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and to two worldwide bodies (the Lutheran World Federation and the Anglican Communion).

Most of you know that the Beloved Community came to be in August of 2017 when the Episcopal Church of the Intercession and Redeemer Lutheran Church signed a Covenant to partner together as one faith community of two churches. Our first Covenant was for two years, and in 2019, we signed a second Covenant to continue living together in this covenanted partnership of two churches. In 2019, we did adjust the Covenant a bit to reflect the current status of how we were actually living and working together. Since 2017, there has been growth and change, loss and gain. When we came together, each church brought its own strengths and weaknesses to the partnership in hopes that we might learn how to be a more faithful and wider expression of the Body of Christ.

Currently, when we look at “assets” of the Beloved Community, here’s how it breaks down:

- The Episcopal Church of the Intercession has 40 active\* households, \_\_\_\_\_ inactive households and 16 pledging households. Intercession has 3 investment funds whose earnings contribute to Intercession’s income
- Redeemer Lutheran Church has 60 active\* households, \_\_\_\_\_ inactive households and 22 pledging households. Redeemer owns the building and grounds which earns income for Redeemer.
- **The Beloved Community has 6 households that belong to both churches; all six are active (and new) members; all six are pledging households**

*\*Active is loosely defined as members who have either given financially during 2020 or who have been engaging in the worship and activities of the churches in the past year.*

While we have made space for new members to join as Beloved Community members, we have not resolved all the questions that come with members who do not necessarily define themselves exclusively as Episcopal or Lutheran. Both churches list these folks as members in our official roles and their monetary gifts are split between the two churches. Unanswered questions for this type of membership are:

- When it comes to voting, what voting rights do these members have?
- How can these new Beloved Community members take part in elected leadership since leadership currently consists of a specified number from each denomination?

On Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, we will also hear from both treasurers about our financial status and the proposed budget for 2021. Each church will meet separately after the budget has been presented. Redeemer will need to vote to approve the budget as this is what the ELCA constitution calls for; Intercession’s Vestry will have already approved the budget, as per the Episcopal constitution, but the Vestry then needs to present the budget to Intercession membership and allow for discussion and questions and answers. The proposed budget for 2021 is attached.

In 2021, we will need to sign a new covenant; again, we will probably need to do some adjustment to reflect what we are learning as we follow the Spirit’s lead in this partnership of becoming a wider expression of the

Body of Christ. To this end, leadership will meet on the day before our annual gathering to determine a way for leadership to listen to all active households of the Beloved Community concerning our present life together and our future. While it is leadership's job to determine a path forward, we can't do this discernment without listening to God nor without listening to you---God's Beloved. You will hear more about this listening process at the Annual Gathering/Meeting on Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>.

One last thing: Since we are living in unprecedented times during a pandemic, we are asking that you allow for us to "set aside" electing new leadership for 2021 and that we have a one-year hold on elections---with the exception for the need to fill any leadership position that opens up due to resignation or other reasons. This means the elected leaders who have been working together during this pandemic can stay together and see us through this unprecedented time in our life together. Each church will vote on this on Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>. It will be a simple yes/no vote for the following:

*In 2021, those members of Beloved Community of Intercession Episcopal and Redeemer Lutheran Churches who hold elected leadership positions on Vestry and Council will remain in place, regardless of term limits, in order to maintain the same leadership throughout the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. The one exception to this constitutional adjustment will be to elect any new members of leadership in the case of resignation or other just cause for stepping down from the elected position.*

We hope that you will take part in our Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, starting at 9:30 a.m. The best way to participate is to join the Zoom gathering on that Sunday (link on our website and in weekly email). By being on Zoom, you will be able to join the breakout rooms when the churches meet separately as well as easily vote when voting is needed. You can join our Zoom gathering via a computer or a phone. If you are not on Zoom, but you are watching on Facebook live (what is able to be shared and seen on Facebook live) or YouTube, you will be able to call in to our elected leaders if you wish to voice a question or concern. You may either call Redeemer's President, Erika Page (715-498-3614), or Intercession's Senior Warden, Diane Petrovic-Rice (715-310-3530). Another option to share any questions or concerns is to call any of the elected leadership prior to the February 7<sup>th</sup> gathering.

Redeemer Council Membership: President-Erika Page; Vice-President-MaryJo Laube; Members at Large-Gary Cumley, Kendra Cychosz, and Jason Studinski

Intercession Vestry Membership: Senior Warden-Diane Petrovic-Rice; Junior Warden-Kathryn Blakeman; Members at Large-Sara Kawski, Edgar Francis, and Mary Schoonover.

Let us remember: the Church is the gathering of the people. The Church does not reside in a national or worldwide office or in its ordained members, but primarily in and through the lives of all of its members. And as the once Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple once said: "The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members."

Peace and blessings,

Jane Johnson

Priest and Pastor of the Beloved Community of Intercession Episcopal and Redeemer Lutheran Churches