

From the Interim Pastor



I was again attracted to a piece by CPH CONCORDIA TRACTS entitled *Is Lent Worth It?* I believe it will be a blessing to all of you as Lent starts on February 25th:

"I'm giving up Lent for Lent." That's what one of my best friends says every Ash Wednesday. She lives where Lent happens in the "cabin fever" time of late winter. She sees Lent as nothing but a time of gloom and doom. Lent isn't worthwhile, as far as she is concerned.

Lent is More Than Gloom

Yet Christians have observed Lent for centuries. Does that mean millions of people have loved to be gloomy for six-and-a-half weeks before Easter? No. Instead, it suggests that observing Lent can be worthwhile.

Lent began centuries ago as a time of preparation for Easter. In the early church, adult candidates for Baptism spent the 40 days before Easter (not counting Sundays) as a special time of intense instruction. They were preparing to be received into church membership at the Easter Vigil, the Saturday night before Easter Day.

Make Lent Worthwhile

How can we, hundreds of years later, make Lent worth our time and energy? Here are some ideas:

- *Worship often.* During Lent many congregations expand their worship schedule beyond the weekend. They offer special services on Ash Wednesday and during Holy Week. Others set aside midweek days for worship. Take advantage of these extra opportunities to gain more insight into God's love for us in Jesus Christ and to grow in your faith. Travel spiritually with other Christians to Jerusalem for Holy Week. Give thanks that there Jesus suffered and died for the forgiveness of our sins.
- *Read the Scriptures.* If you don't read the Bible daily at present, Lent is a great time to start. Ask your pastor or a Christian friend you respect for suggested ways to begin. Read one of the gospels during Lent, or all four gospel accounts of the suffering and death of Jesus (Matthew 26—27; Mark 14—15; Luke 22—23; John 18—19).
- *Pray.* Lent can be a time to strengthen prayer life. Use a 3 X 5 index card, listing persons and concerns for whom you wish to pray. Then pray daily for them. (Using the same time each day for reading the Bible and praying will help get you in the habit.)

- *Remember the hungry.* Some persons "give up" something during Lent, to remind them of what Jesus gave up to be our Savior. You may wish to try that. You may wish to skip one meal each week during Lent, giving the money saved to world hunger or a local food pantry.
- *Remember the poor.* Lent also has been a time when Christians especially remember the poor. Ancient believers called it "alms giving." Find one way in which you show Christian love by serving those who are less fortunate than you.

A Spiritual Springtime

Is Lent worth it? That depends on your viewpoint. Lent can be a spiritually gloomy time. Or, Lent can be a time to quietly meditate on the marvel that Jesus went to the cross to suffer and die for our sins. His sacrifice is the special focus of Holy Week, at the end of Lent.

As we thank Jesus, we respond by finding ways to make Lent worthwhile and it becomes a spiritual springtime. "Springtime" is probably what the word "Lent" originally meant. When Lent is a spiritual springtime for us, it's worth it! Read: Isaiah 53:10; Colossians 2:6—15

Lent is the period of 40 days from Ash Wednesday to Easter, not counting the Sundays. Lent is more than a tradition of the church which asks us to "give up" something to prove our devotion. Lent focuses our attention on the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ to pay for our sins. Lent becomes a spiritual springtime" as we find ways to make it worthwhile."

How true, how true ! Here at Redeemer we do have two Ash Wednesday services and two mid-week services each Wednesday at 4:30 and 7 PM right up until Holy Week (April 5-12). We even have Lenten suppers between services where you can enjoy being with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

This year our Mid-Week Lenten Series is *The Body of Christ* which through Scripture readings and hymns, homilies and prayers, will invite us to focus our attention on the very body our Lord Jesus sacrificed for our salvation. Make a commitment to yourself now, so we can all be **MAKING LENT WORTH-WHILE** together here at Redeemer!!

Love in HIM, Pastor Thomason

Pastor Warren Thomason

REDEEMER LUTHERAN
CHURCH

Interim Pastor Rev. Warren Thomason
Office

Secretary Jennifer Steele

Organist Doris Dykhuizen

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Michelle Finley

Finance Sec'y. Karen Kirkland

Newsletter Editor Leta Stender

CLUBS/GUILDS

Ladies Guild Carol Sheahan

Men's Group Bob Mortenson

Red Hat Society Sandra Distasio

Christian Support Group

President's Corner



The President's Corner

The biggest concern is the health of our beloved Pastor T. Tim and I had dinner with Peggy and Pastor last Tuesday and Pastor was himself, telling stories and we were all laughing and a couple of hours later Tim called to inform me that Pastor was on his way to the hospital and was having a heart attack. As of this morning he is still having trouble with low blood pressure, and will see his heart Doctor on Monday. Please keep Pastor and Peggy in your prayers.

If you missed the Pot Luck dinner for Pastor Grams and his family you missed a good time and some great food. Pastor Grams and his wife Susan were very impressed with the turnout and the great food. I think their entire visit was very positive, and we should hear of his decision next week, so keep them in your prayers. If Pastor Grams declines our call we will contact Pastor Kress and offer to fly him and his wife to Englewood. The voters have given the call committee permission to Call Pastor Kress if Pastor Grams declines our Call so we will not be required to have a second Voters meeting to issue the Call to Pastor Kress. Your board of Elders will have this is done ASAP.

We said goodbye to our Secretary this morning in church and the Council presented her with a check for the years of dedicated service to the church. We also had a door offering so the congregation could show her how much she has meant to us. You can still contribute to this fund, just send your contribution to the church and Leta will be sure it gets to Pat. We all wish Pat the best and a speedy recovery with her surgery this Thursday, so keep her and her family in your prayers. Pat told me this morning that although she will not be able to return as our Secretary she will still be as active in the church as possible.

The new secretary is Jennifer Steele, and was introduced at the 10:30 service this morning. Jennifer was selected from 3 great applicants. She comes to us with a wealth of experience in a church setting, and is very familiar with all the latest software. She will be a great addition to our church family. We wish her the best as she begins this week and I will ask you all to give her any assistance she needs, as I am sure we all will.

The Spaghetti Youth Supper was a huge success. The sauce was homemade by Lisa, and it was fantastic. The youth served twice as many dinners as they did last year, and the only problem was the size of the crowd. Thanks for a great job to the youth, their parents and especially to Michelle Finley, and Jim Wright.

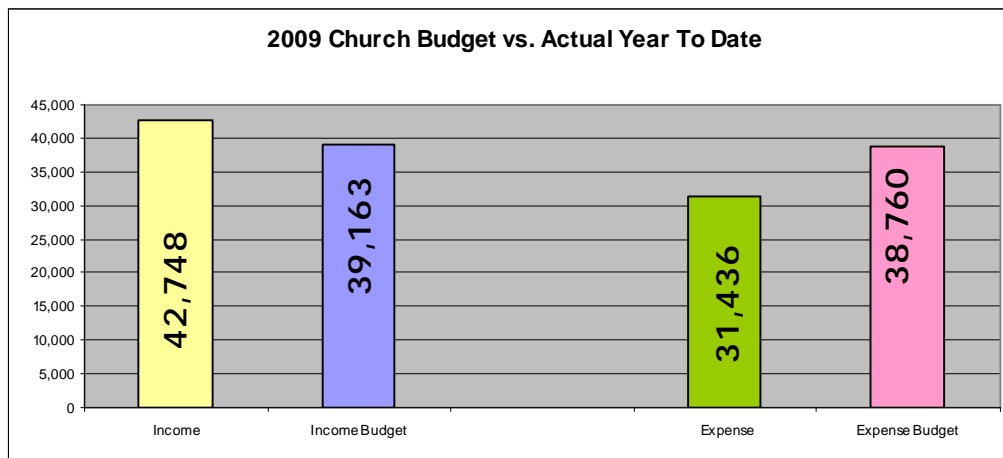
All of the Church functions held in Feb. were well attended, with great food, and a renewed spirit of fellowship. I think it is great that we can get together and have a good time and get to know each other better. I am sure this spirit will continue to grow as we get together for dinners during Lent, and as our new Pastor begins his ministry.

Ron Beaber, President

Finance

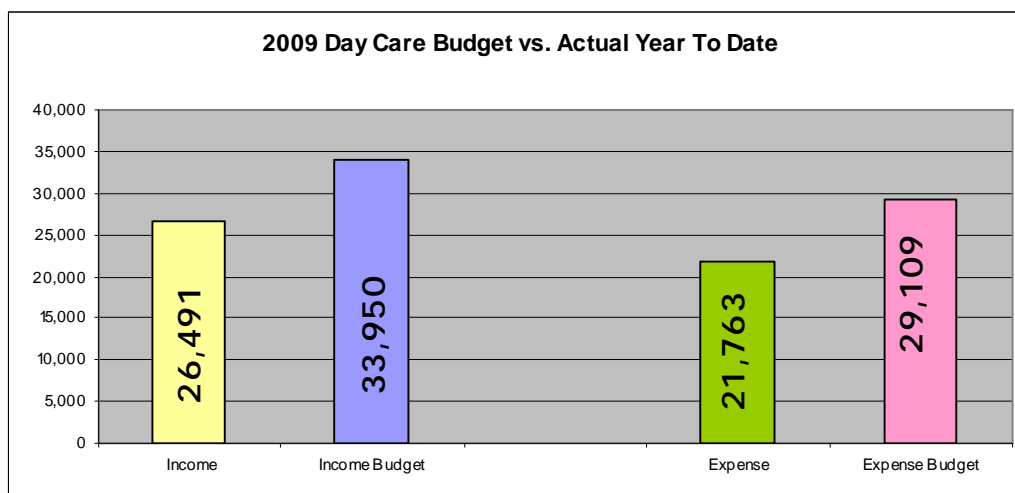
2009 Church Budget Actual vs. Budget Year to Date Through February 21, 2009

<u>Actual Income</u>	<u>Income Budget</u>	<u>Actual Expenses</u>	<u>Expense Budget</u>
\$42,748	\$39,163	\$31,436	\$38,760



2008 Day Care Actual vs. Budget Year to Date Through February 21, 2009

<u>Actual Income</u>	<u>Income Budget</u>	<u>Actual Expenses</u>	<u>Expense Budget</u>
\$26,491	\$33,950	\$21,763	\$29,109



Dance With The Star Party

On February 11th, the "Dance with the Star" Party was held in the Fellowship Hall. It was one vigorous occasion!! Ladies lined up a dozen deep to dance with our Star, Pastor T! A few others got into the act too! Dancers were on the floor all evening dancing to the music of the wonderful band, "Quiet Fire"!

The food, provided by the choir, was amazing, and abundant!

The "Stonettes" performed wonderfully well, and are almost ready to compete with the Rockettes! — Probably by next year!

The noise level was such that people from Punta Gorda were calling to find out what was going on! (That's not true, but you get the idea!)

All in all, it was an evening to remember, and many thanks to all who in any way helped to make it so!

Submitted by Doris Dykhuizen

(see pictures on pages 12 and 13)

Youth

This has been a very busy time for us. We had a Youth valentines party on Feb. 19th at the church after confirmation class. There was pizza, candy and ice cream sundaes followed by games. A sugar high for all. A special thank you to Sheila Murphy and Lisa Vassallo for making this party happen for the children.



On Feb. 20th we had our annual Youth Spaghetti Dinner. This is a fund raiser that helps pay for all the youth outings. Our youth were all present, many of their parents and some of our members were there to serve and we served 135 plus. Our thanks to the congregation for making this a success. There was good fellowship and good food had by all.

Feb. 28th is the Crop Walk which our Youth will participate in. We are looking forward to a great day.

Submitted by Jim Wright

Dear Members and Friends of Redeemer Lutheran Church,

Thank you for all your prayers to our heavenly Father on behalf of my father, Bruce, and my family during my father's illness. As many of you know, my father passed away on February 13 in Oregon. Your expressions of sympathy were much appreciated and have brought us all great comfort in our time of grief.

Sincerely,

Rev. Kenneth Ferrier



Thank You!



GREETERS SCHEDULE

Mar. 1	Dottie LaMere & Leta Stender
Mar. 8	Georgia Lang & Marlene Mossner
Mar. 15	Youth Sunday
Mar. 22	Mary Beaber & Karen Kirkland
Mar. 29	Stephen Ministry Sunday Carol & Susan Haupt

Submitted by Pam DeGourse

8:00	
Mar. 1	Erwin & Gudrun Janke
Mar. 8	John & Marilyn Melcher
Mar. 15	Tom & Donna Kohn
Mar. 22	Jim & Jeanell Peek
Mar. 29	Tom & Georgia Lang
10:30	
Mar. 1	Bill & Marva Jonas
Mar. 8	Francis & Marion Zillins
Mar. 15	June & Sheridan Markert
Mar. 22	Bob & Dottie LaMere
Mar. 29	Ray & Dolores Altmann

Submitted by Pam DeGourse

Newsletter Deadline



The deadline for submission of articles for April is Sunday, March 22nd by 12 noon.

If you have an article you would like to submit for the newsletter, either e-mail it to letastender@gmail.com or place it in the newsletter box in the church office. Articles received after March 22nd will be held for the May newsletter.

Please be sure to put your name on the article so I can contact you if there are any questions.

Leta Stender

Doris L. Speer, Deputy General Counsel of Alstom, Paris France, daughter of Vern and Ruth Speer is one of five nominees of 3,000 candidates for the "European Lawyer of the Year Award" by the International Law Offices and Association of Corporate Counsel worldwide. The winner will be chosen at a black tie dinner in London on March 26th. Her family and friends are truly proud of her accomplishments and wish her future success and God's Blessings!



Ladies Guild—Lutheran Women in Mission

Mites for Missions on March 1. In 2008 Amigos en Cristo opened a new ministry center among the 34,000 Hispanic and Haitian immigrants of Immokalee Florida with the purpose of beginning the first Lutheran Church in this Farm worker community. A \$15,000 grant will help fund the Immokalee Lutheran Mission Church. Coins from Redeemer members will help make this mission outreach a reality. The large Mite Box will be on the oak console in the Narthex on March 1 for coins and bills. Your help makes YOU a Missionary!



Women -- bring your Mite Box and a friend to our March 4 meeting at 12:30 pm.

Submitted by Vicky Davis

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE LADIES GUILD!!!

I would like to thank the Ladies Guild for the beautiful vase of flowers and the Gift Certificate. What a way to start my retirement!!

Thank you for your thoughtfulness.

Pat Wilcoxon



Child Care

CHILD CARE Ingathering Basket -- Sunday -- March 1. Redeemer members and friends are gathering much needed items for our mission outreach to the Child Care. Let's fill the basket on the oak console in the Narthex the FIRST SUNDAY of every month. Other Sundays the basket will be on the bench next to the Men's Room. NEEDED: non-scented Baby Wipes, Pump Foam Soap, Paper Towels, Kleenex, Trash Bags and Fish crackers. When we donate, they don't have to buy! We ask EVERYONE to assist with this Mission Service project. Can we count on YOU?

Submitted by Vicky Davis

Human Care



.Our Stephen Minister students will finish their classes on March 27th and will be commissioned on March 29th. More receivers have come on board and their every member visits are ongoing.

Our shut-in visits are ongoing at this time. We are looking for someone who might be able to pick up Ruth Sutley for church on Sundays. She lives at River Oaks Assisted Living facility by the Englewood post office. It would most likely be for the late service. If you can help with this service, please call Marj Sterriker at 475-0553. Thank you!!

We have received another very nice thank you from service personnel, Jeremy Twombly. These men have certainly been very appreciative of these packages.

Our Caring Network is functioning quite well. Please avail yourselves of this service if you or someone you know has a need for help. If you don't know who your leader is, please contact Lessie Kirch at 475-3689 for assistance.

Don't forget our Care Note Rack in the narthex. These helpful brochures address many of the concerns that come up in our lives. Also remember the heart pillows in the basket at the end of the long desk in the Narthex. Give one to a fellow member, neighbor or friend who is ill and needs cheering up.

Don't forget our Sr. Fellowship meetings on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 10:00 a.m. Join us for fun, games and a light lunch. Yum!

We have discontinued sending out birthday cards to our members, but will try to remember those who are ill or grieving. Is there someone who would be interested in this stewardship project during the summer months? Please let Marj know.

The Christian Support Group's new gathering place is in the church narthex on the last Wednesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. Each meeting has a special leader who opens the session with prayers, emphasizes faith growth and directs the discussion. All persons are welcome whether a Redeemer member or non-member. (Submitted by Helene DeGourse.)

We plan to offer a seminar in the future for the public as well as Redeemer members. We will let you know soon about a topic and date.

Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. Psalm 82:3,4 Happy are the people who are a part of His provision for those who are near and dear to his heart. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

Submitted by Marj Sterriker

New Members



Roger & Patricia Luedtke
 6216 Kamback Street
 Port Charlotte, FL 33981 (941) 828-2635

Roger & Patricia transferred from St. Michaels Lutheran Church in Hebron, Indiana and moved to Englewood in November, 2008. Roger retired from his position in Business Development of Steel Mills and Construction. Patricia has also retired and now enjoys reading and decorating at her leisure. They have 4 children living in Indiana and Missouri. They researched our church on its website and felt welcomed when they arrived! They were both active in many of their church's programs.



Jim & Jeanell Peek
 745 Portwine Court
 Englewood, FL 34223 (941) 473-1133

Jim & Jeanell are from Illinois where they attend Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Palatine, IL. Before their retirement Jim worked as a CPA in Management & Human Resources and Jeanell from her hospital work as a registered nurse. Jim enjoys photography, farming & gardening. Jeanell enjoys music, gardening, crafting teddy bears and rabbits! Both enjoy hiking and traveling whenever they can. They have 3 children and 4 grandchildren.



Donald & Mac Andersen
 736 Harmony Lane
 Englewood, FL 34223 (941) 474-0526

Donald & Mae are from Duluth, MN where they attend Christ the King Lutheran Church. Don and Mae worked with U.S. Steel Co. and after its closure Dan worked for Westline Lake Superior Sanitary District and Mae worked for the SD709 School District and then with Peterson Landscape Yard Maintenance Company. They both enjoy gardening and the Florida weather. They have 2 sons and 6 grandchildren.



Harry & Mayrie Dawson
 207 High Point Drive (Unit B)
 Englewood, FL 34223 (941) 473-9395

Harry & Mayrie are from Utica, MI and attended Trinity Lutheran Church. Harry is retired from General Motors and Mayrie worked in the Drapery and Blind business out of their home. Harry enjoys wood-working and crafting furniture. Mayrie is enjoying stained glass mosaic classes. Both have enjoyed refinishing antiques and now enjoy golf when time allows. They have 3 sons and 6 grandchildren.

Submitted by Avis Stuck

New Members



Duwayne Schoeneck
188 Annapolis Lane
Rotonda West, FL 33947 (941) 697-8444

Duwayne was born and raised in MN but has lived in Toledo, OH for the last 16 years. He transferred from St. John's Lutheran Church. He spent 33 years as chief cook for the crews of many freighters and boats traveling on the Great Lakes. Duwayne enjoys doing yard work, meeting with friends for cards and coffee and Florida's warm weather.



Richard & Lisa Vassall-Ruccatano
12708 Bacchus Road
Port Charlotte, FL 33981 (941) 698-0093

Richard & Lisa are from New Jersey and attended St. Paul Lutheran Church in Beachwood. Richard served as Captain with the New Jersey City Fire Department and Lori enjoyed working as a floral designer in Beachwood. Richard is an avid golfer and fisherman. Lori loves animals and is now a sales representative for the Dick Van Patten Natural Balance Pet Food Company. They have 2 sons, Alex 13 and Billy 12, Ruccatano



Warren & Lorraine Wright
9181 Griggs Road, Lot 18
Englewood, FL 34224 (941) 697-5201

Warren and Lori are from Davidson, NC and attend the Ascension Lutheran Church in Charlotte, NC. Both have retired, Don from teaching and Lori from secretarial work. Warren is an avid reader, enjoys our Florida weather and Lori enjoys reading, the Red Hat Society, and being involved with active people. They have 2 sons and 4 grandchildren.

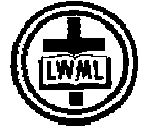


Dave & Gayle DeBraccio
1335 Holliday Drive
Englewood, FL 34224 (941) 473-4980

Dave and Gayle are from Mentor, OH and attend Zion Lutheran Church in Painesville, OH. Dave is a Medical Equipment Salesman and Gayle is an X-ray technician. Both enjoy their motorcycle and taking many trips. They have lived in Englewood only 3 weeks and found our church to be the one they wished to join! They have 6 grandchildren.

Submitted by Avis Stuck

Ladies Guild



The Ladies Guild welcomed guests Lanette Schmidt, Marlene Moessner, and Gundrun Janke at the February meeting.

Chairman of the Youth Group Jim Wright reported on their activities. They will participate in the Crop Walk on Feb. 28th. The Outreach Board is providing them with Redeemer T-shirts.

Stephanie Woodford Administrative Services coordinator of Solve Maternity Homes was guest speaker. They are a Christian non-profit organization that provides a home for pregnant women who desire an alternative to abortion. Their structured program includes childbirth and parenting classes, adoptive options, counseling, etc. Their newest Solve House in Englewood is home to 3 expectant mothers. A \$200 love gift was given to Solve.

Ruth Speer, Co-Chairman of the Guild Style Show and Luncheon reported that 41 newcomers were present. The net proceeds were \$1,103.26. A request was made to Thrivent for matching funds. This will be used for our annual Love Gifts.

Barbara Bishop reported the ongoing need for paper goods, hand soap, snacks, etc. for child care. A basket is in the Narthex for donations. Angel Fund Scholarship applicants are evaluated periodically according to need.

Redeemer will be hosting the LWML Zone Rally on Nov. 7, 2009. Preparations are in the making. We need everyone's help.

A long-time member Laura Brooks is moving to Michigan with her niece in Livonia. A Lutheran Home in Livonia will be her eventual home. We will all miss her.

Ladies Guild next meeting is March 4th at 12:30. Come join us for good fellowship and fun.

Submitted by Linda Rogers, Vice President (941) 697-1117

Scrip

March Scrip orders will be taken at the monthly Ladies Guild/LWML meeting Wednesday March 4 and Sunday March 8. The orders will be returned the following Sunday, March 15. Scrip is the same gift cards purchased at restaurants, drug stores, grocery stores, etc. A complete list of retailers and order blanks are available in the narthex.

Sybil Grahl will be taking orders after both services. The proceeds support the missions of the Ladies Guild/LWML. Thank you for supporting this effort.

*Sybil Grahl
Ladies Guild Secretary*

Service Directory/Classified Ads

Services

Beautician/Manicurist

Debbie Balogh
Linda Pontello

Purple Palace
Purple Palace

941-475-0731
941-475-0731

Pressure Cleaning - Matt & Michelle Finley - Hoover Pressure Cleaning – 697-6886

Tell us you saw us in the Redeemer Newsletter & get a 10% discount.

Licensed & Insured – www.hooverpressure.com

6" Seamless Gutters-Jim W. Gossett, Residential Const, Licensed & Insured Home: (941) 698-9940; Cell: (941) 445-2074

J & J Lawn Service—Quality service at an affordable price. Mowing, weed-eating, blowing, edging, and palm tree trimming. Call John at (941) 456-1163 for a free estimate.

Handyman Licensed & Insured Call Jim Gossett Home: (941) 698-9940; Cell: (941) 445-2074

John Toth Handyman. If it's broken, I can fix it. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Home: (941) 697-1670 Cell: (910) 320-4987

Grandma's Domestic Service — Pet Sitting, Errands & Dr. Visits, Help with Elderly & Invalids, Cleaning & Cooking, House & Yard Work — Call Carol (941) 474-4926

Sales—Rentals Pineapple Gulf Properties—Glenda McDorman, Owner/Broker (Lessie Kirch's Daughter)
880 S. McCall Rd., Englewood (941) 473-0300—Office (941) 330-7922—Cell

I wish to say "THANK YOU" to my Redeemer family for their generosity to me upon my retirement. The applause, the check, the signed card, the door offering and many hugs, were so appreciated.

Being Redeemer's Church Secretary for the past six and a half years has been a rewarding experience.

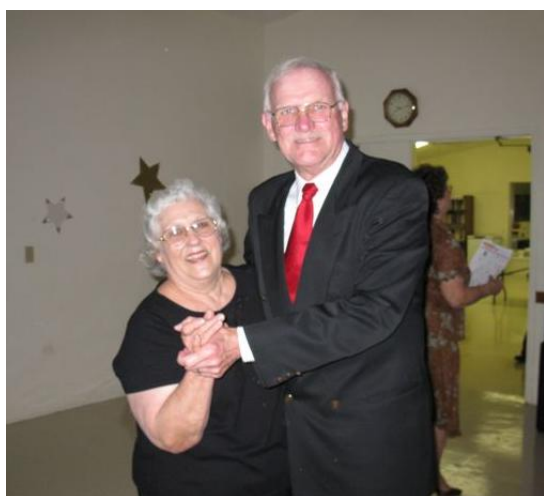
I would like to take this opportunity thank everyone for the many prayers that are being offered for my impending surgery.

Again, Thank you to my Redeemer Family.

God's Blessings, Pat Wilcoxon



Dance With the Star



Dance With the Star



From The Office



DIRECTORY

ADDRESS CHANGES

Laura Brooks
20464 Meadowview Lane
Livonia, MI 48152

Changes are thru February 22, 2009.

Thank you,
Pat Wilcoxon, Church Secretary



HEALING:

Members

Henrietta Appold
 Ione Comstock
 Ginny Doenges
 Cecil Grahl
 Bob & Joan Johnson
 Charles Keller
 Cliff Larsen
 Leona Morrison
 Carolyn Plesner
 Don Plesner
 Sharron Schultz
 Pat Wilcoxon

Friends & Relatives

Phil Alcantara
 Elaine Baron
 Ella Boegeman
 Georgia Bush
 Kay Cypher
 Dorothy Doenges
 Debbie Harrison
 Hal
 Larry Headun
 Michelle Hickner
 Howard Kagay
 Rachel Kagay
 Jeremy Krienke
 Rev. Howie Krienke
 Estella Lewis
 John Lichty
 Marie Liebl

Elsie Malecki
 Ann McCullough
 Kaye Ann Nagel
 Judy Nagel
 Charles Pentecost, Jr.
 Sherrie Rhoades
 Audrey Slusher
 Nancy Sly
 Michael Stio
 Marion Talley
 Katie Taseff
 Polly Tice
 Phyllis Tucker
 Kathy Walsh
 Helen Weishaar
 Virgil Weldy



PRAYERS OF COMFORT FOR Ken Ferrier and family whose father [Bruce Ferrier](#) was called to his eternal home on Feb.13, 2009



Ilse Berner
 Herb Bohm
 Gloria Carlson
 Evelyn Etheridge
 Earl Gossett
 Ruth Jansch
 Clara & Walter Mitchell
 Ruth Sutley



Daniel Anderson
 Adam Buchner
 Eric Byrne
 Kevin Copeman
 Christopher Dutch
 Stephen Geib
 Brian Hollis
 Nathan Hudson

Brian Jackson
 Jennie Janssen
 Keith Janssen
 Joshua Jones
 Jeremy Twombly
 Matthew Walenta
 Charles Weishaar

March 2009 Newsletter

Enrollment is 59 Children

Redeemer Lutheran Child Care & After-School



Bible lessons

Chapel is on Mondays at 3:30

Jesus Heals a Blind Man
Mark 10:46-52

Zacchaeus Luke 19:1-10

Children Praise Jesus Mat-
thew 21:7-11, 14-16

Jesus Dies and Arises
Matthew 27:32-28:6; John
20:11-18

Easter John 20



Blessed... are
those who hear the word
of God. Luke 11:28

Birthdays

Shelby 3/1

Andrew 3/8

Vincent 3/31

Aidan 3/31



Items Needed

Trash bags, Baby wipes,
Hand soap, snacks and Pa-
per towels.

Thank you to all who do-
nated supplies last month.
Please keep them coming.

Special events

Love was in the air during
our Valentines Pizza
Lunch. Parents, Grandpar-
ents and Friends enjoyed
eating lunch with their
special valentine.

The VPK Classroom had an
Old Fashioned Rodeo with
homemade horses, vests,
hats and trail mix. They
took to the outdoors and
galloped around the
grounds and lassoed some
make believe cows
(chairs).

(see picture on page 14)



Submitted by Wendy Horvath

Stewardship

Gratitude for God's Blessings, March 2009

"Newness and Balance"

In March we observe the beginning of spring, that season of the year in which the plants that lay dormant during the winter begin to grow again. It is also a day on which there is balance—twelve hours of sunshine and twelve hours of darkness.

Spring is a good reminder of these two important things about stewardship—newness and balance! By God's grace in Jesus Christ we are freed from the failures of the past and freed to live in the present with purpose and look to the future with hope. How refreshing a new start is!

Balance is the other important thing associated with wise Christian stewardship. The Rich Fool in Luke 12:13-21 lost his stewardship balance and the result was disastrous. He already had more than enough to meet his personal needs and when he was blessed with even more he decided to tear down his barns and build larger ones where he could store up all his goods for himself and take life easy with the attitude of "eat, drink and be merry." Jesus called him a fool because he tried to store up riches for himself but was not rich toward God.

We in the United States of America live in a very materialistic culture. There is the emphasis on getting ahead, building a solid nest egg and saving up for retirement. Now, if these things were kept in a good Christian balance, the picture would not be so bad. The danger is that we try to keep all these material things for ourselves with too little concern about the purposes of God or the needs of others. The Rich Fool had so much he could have at least shared his excess with others in need. He could also have generously given for the support of the "church" of his day. If he had done that then all would have benefited, including him. But he didn't and he died a lost and condemned sinner.

How can we take advantage of new starts in stewardship and maintain a good balance as we manage the material riches God pours down upon us? One simple plan for keeping balance is to adopt and follow the 1-1-8 principle. This plan involves giving the first 10% to God in response to His great love for us and for the support of His work in this world, then saving or investing the next 10% and finally living on the remaining 80%. Mathematically it adds up perfectly. In practice it can be a real challenge, one that seems unreachable to many who may currently be trying to live on 100% (or more) of their income.

It may not work for everyone to adopt the 1-1-8 plan immediately, but what joy God's people can experience as they move in that new direction for balance. Oh, by the way, many Christian stewards have learned from experience that they can give more than 10%, save even more than 10% and live very comfortably on less than 80%.

May God grant to all of us His grace, good judgment and discipline to take advantage of each new start and manage our material blessings in a way that honors Him, blesses others and refreshes us!

Joseph Friess
Stewardship Chairman

