

Redeemer Cottage Meetings - 2009

Meeting Notes

Cottage Meeting 1

What attracted you to Redeemer?

Comfort, the fact that it was an Episcopal Church
Welcoming in an easy going way
Friendly
Good place for children and families
Emphasis on relationships within the parish

How often do you typically attend?

Regularly
As often as possible
When we are in town-when we are away, we miss Redeemer and the community and need to come back for the people, the music and the relationships-it feels like coming home
Music is great-Cheryl does a great job.
I get a lot out of going.
I can't imagine not going.
People draw me to the church.
The love of the church family draws me.
Historical perspective
I enjoy receiving the Eucharist as it is both a personal and community experience.

Anything about the worship in particular that draws you?

The music, the clapping and singing when sending the children out to Sunday school
The communion hymns sung as people are receiving the bread and wine
Standing at the end of communion once everyone has received the sacrament

What else about Redeemer is important to you?

Bristol Lodge, cooking for them and delivering the food, the extended history of our ministry with them
We recalled with fondness several activities that were once part of our Redeemer community but have been discontinued, including the rummage sales, the weekday soup luncheons, the Episcopal Church Women and St. Ann's Society, and the silver teas at Christmas.

We enjoy the opportunities to get together as a community and share in the effort and to participate in activities.

It seems that, in today's world, with both spouses typically working and our busy lives, there is little or no time for activities that used to occur but which were important to building our church community.

What most excites you about Redeemer?

The people

Being together

Being a community

The vibrancy I feel at our church today, and the presence of many young families

Is there an opportunity for Redeemer to have its own daycare facility instead of leasing the space out? That could serve as a magnet for attracting young people.

What are your hopes and fears for Redeemer?

Hope: That our youth programs remain strong

Fear: That we somehow won't translate our growth in the youth programs into a larger group of engaged and involved adults

Side question: Is there any concern that the emphasis on youth and families might result in older members feeling neglected?

Generally, the feeling among this group was that they did not feel neglected, but there might be some in the parish who do feel that way.

Hope: That there can be more opportunities for true intergenerational activities, especially ones that involve the youth and older members outside of their own families.

What ministries have special meaning to you?

I want to make sure the monies get outside of Redeemer. My hope is that 50% of our budget could go to supporting others outside of our parish. I know that is an aggressive goal.

There's a balance to be struck between reaching out and taking care of Redeemer and its community so that it can serve others.

Esperanza

Healing and support ministries like the healing service around Christmas last year, that also include people from other churches and beyond.

Home ministries have been a constant at Redeemer.

It all stems from having a caring and loving community.

If you could change one thing about Redeemer, what would it be and why?

This question was greeted with silence, which we all agreed spoke volumes! I am not fond of some of the rituals, like the “parading” of the bible before the Gospel reading, and it makes me somewhat uncomfortable, but it isn’t something that I can’t live with.

I prefer the traditional version of the Lord’s Prayer, and I’ve heard young people say that they prefer it, too.

There was appreciation expressed for the process of listening, and for our hosts.

Cottage Meeting 2

What drew you to Redeemer

Originally looking for a community outside my child's school and my work.

Looking for a local Episcopal church.

Initial experience of Redeemer – very welcoming and inviting for children and all people; kids running around; I could do what I wanted. I don't think that part of Redeemer has changed over 22 years.

What keeps you here now?

Community - it's home; my "family"; a warm place.

Really feel that Redeemer is rich; alive; good. The music, programs, catechesis are all wonderful. Redeemer has the message we have in our home – we love you no matter what.

Worship discussion

I have been very involved at Redeemer "doing" versus "being" over the past few years. Missing a connection to the service – would like more spiritually challenging worship. It's hard to be fragile or vulnerable in a community like Lexington (and therefore Redeemer). DOC program was meaningful – a place where we could be vulnerable. Need more small group programs like DOC.

Not enough silent time – we're not doing that well. Should remind the congregation what silence is about so it isn't uncomfortable.

It's probably not our culture to have silent time at the beginning of the service – we've tried.

What about a silent retreat?

We can do more to help adults develop their own spiritual relationship with God.

Have regular social and spiritual events so people can connect more with each other.

Annoyed when we use the contemporary Lord's Prayer. Don't like the altar moved forward.

9:30 service is hard on our elder parishioners and will be more so during the winter. Too early – it takes them more time to get ready and get out in the morning.

Love the Episcopal service – happiest when music is accessible and I can sing along. So thankful to the band and choir for the variety of musical offerings. I don't want to be on a liturgy team or even make an announcement (detracts from the worship experience).

In general, I like the traditions, formula, “mechanics”, order of the Episcopal service.

Have gone to many churches in the Deanery and feel Redeemer is unique – understand why the Diocese “holds us up”.

We do get “too busy”. (When asked for clarification, the example had to do with approaching newcomers to join an activity right away rather than giving them time to get to know the parish.)

What would you change?

Paint the sanctuary something other than white.

New wall hangings.

Do more special services once in a while (person was planning to go to a Celtic service). Evensong. The Youth Service is great.

Contribute a greater proportion of every dollar collected to mission – e.g. 35 cents or 50 cents.

Mission is so much more than collecting and distributing money. We should connect with other churches in the Deanery and invite them to our programs.

(Very proud that Redeemer hosts the Korean Church and the Lexington Interfaith Food Pantry.)

We should put up solar panels.

Cottage meeting 3

The conversation focused fairly quickly on the idea of “Hopes and Fears”; several of the comments implicitly identified reasons that people come to (and keep coming to) Redeemer.

One theme on ‘hopes and fears’ was the concern for “balance” among what we might want to do and what we can support. How do we find this? Can we set priorities?

- We are taking on a lot
- Can we do everything we have taken on and still maintain what we are doing? For example there are ‘needs’ (even ‘neglects’) that need attention: a pew falling apart, weeds in the labyrinth garden.
- Where does the person power, the passion, come from? Different people have passions for different aspects of the community – eg: music or property.
- The rhetorical question posed: If I don’t do it (eg: J2A teaching) will someone else do it? Will we move on from what we used to do?
- We have aspirations – do we have the resources? Should we prioritize?
- Our resources include leadership as well as money – do we have enough of those?

Several people noted that they keep coming because of their kids – and the way that their kids have grown up and become a deep part of the community – and the community a part of them. They saw this as a place where young people can have a different set of friends (outside of schools).

Some discussion acknowledged that times change and society changes, and some activities that have been long cherished have to be set aside. For example the Tuesday workshop and the Christmas Fair. As the generation that drove these things steps aside there is not a group with the same kind of time to pick up the role.

On the other hand, Redeemer has moved into other activities, that reflect the commitment and passion of new ideas and members. We want to support all good ideas – and we might have trouble saying “no” to something. But these ideas have taken root and become stronger. Mission is an example of deeper relationships than we had before – with El Hogar, Esperanza and the Grown Clinic. Another example is the patriots Day Pancake Breakfast that we jumped into and is an important communication and fundraising event for the Food pantry.

A comment was to look at the aspirations and limits question the other way around – to focus on and emphasize the aspirations, and ask the question: How can we make this happen? Rather than: What is it that we can not do?

The question posed: What programs are “too important” to go away? Some key features of our community life were mentioned – such as music – but nothing specific. The group seemed reluctant to make that list . . .

Toward the end the moderator asked the question about how we (as a community) are weathering the changes we have been through this year. Several people expressed ‘relief’ and felt we are now in a ‘better place’; that these have been good changes. One participant expressed being upset about the process by which the events unfolded; another said they didn’t like the way we got here, but liked where we are now.

Cottage Meeting 4

1. What attracted you to Redeemer and what makes Redeemer appealing to you now?

Welcoming; community

Episcopal church - Continuity of the liturgy and faith understanding .

Disenchanted with (another church in Lexington). Too much politics that doesn't belong in church.

Needed (a faith that) believes in God. Consistent service wherever you go (in reference to BCP). Andi Taylor wonderful and made up for lack of high quality choir or ambience.

Banner making. Was invited. I had something to offer and people appreciated it. No pressure to get involved.

Welcoming gestures – youth leader reached out to my kids and invited them to youth group.

3. What about worship is important to you?

Joyful and energetic service. Lay participation – liturgy teams

Seasonal change in liturgy. God is the reason for everything.

Joyful worship - people uplifted together.

Kneeling together at altar

Music; organ

4. What else about Redeemer is important to you?

Christmas Eve and Easter services. Fall retreat. The band.

Music

7. What do you think is Redeemer's purpose? What is God calling us to do?

Take care of one another. Acceptance and small groups was mentioned.

Challenge and support each other, individually and corporately, in our efforts in the world. E.g. Bill Robinson's El Hogar challenge – people respond and stretch.

Share our love and find places where we are needed.

With the events of the past year, I feel called to be less driven and more centered. Feels like it is time to just “be” instead of “do. There have been no prayer groups, no bible study, no Lenten study groups for a while – time go get back to that. Too many things that need to get done demanding our attention. Don’t want Redeemer to be just one more place demanding my attention.

10. Ministries

Addressing comment that we not longer do pot lucks. Mentioned that they became busy and pot lucks weren’t feasible unless there was a purpose.

Regarding absence of bible study - I have to do bible study with people from another Lexington church. Would like us to consider interfaith options vis a vis mission. Too many are Episcopal-only sponsored. Mentioned failure of leadership at higher levels and parish doesn’t have same agenda as the Bishop.

Need to understand what we as a community have a passion for.

Important that children/youth see the outside world.

Youth are creating community and building relationships (via youth group). Why can’t the adults? Everything we do (pot lucks etc.) is around a purpose – we don’t get together for the sake of getting together.

We’re connected in as much as we connect – there are lots of ways for people to get involved.

We do best when what we do is in small groups.

Something to establish the emotional connection like the small groups have.

11. What are examples of successes here at Redeemer and describe the sources of success?

There are lots of groups that make people feel connected. Lots to pick from.

Something local. Mission focused locally.

We’re very short on organizing people. Something to look forward to throughout the program year. Our groups are connected to each other. Common sense of purpose even though we’re living it out individually.

Mentioned vacation (summer) bible school.

12. If there was one thing that you could change about Redeemer what would it be? Why?

Perhaps we have too many choices. Don't feel we have a common sense of purpose, a "Redeemer identity".

We're very short on people who know how to lead / organize others; how to run programs /events.

13. How would you change it?

Respect and focus on the elderly. Getting children focused on them. Focusing on children as our hope for the future. Take care of older generations.

Program year and Christian Ed – come up with a theme for the year and build everything around that.

Cottage Meeting 5

Our cottage meeting began on a positive note. Everyone agreed on “moving forward”.

Question 1 What attracted you to Redeemer?

The people --- the community --- “it’s like home”.

As we discussed the attraction to Redeemer, the subject of 8 o’clock vs 9:30 came up.

8 -- Connectivity is more difficult as there isn’t music or coffee hour. It was thought that

some attendees preferred this format.

9:30 -- A suggestion was made that there be more traditional music. Another suggestion

was to have a couple of tables set up at coffee hour. (Some of the group find

that sitting together over coffee is an easier way to “strike up a conversation”.)

Question 2 What has kept you at Redeemer?

The people --- the community --- the feeling of acceptance --- the “spirit in worship” --- the community for children --- children participate in worship --- sermons ---

The above list is not necessarily in order of “importance”.

Question 3 How often do you attend Sunday worship?

Most of the group attends every week with the exception of “out-of-town” weekends.

Question 4 What about worship is important to you?

The following were important to our group and, again, not necessarily in the order of importance:

Participation
Communion
Sermon
Music
People

Question 5 What else at Redeemer is important to you?

The support given by fellow parishners in times of need.

Question 6 What most excites you about Redeemer?

Following is a partial list of what our group finds exciting about Redeemer:

Children’s participation

Lack of conflict
Spirit
Overall participation
Atrium Program
Energy
Lay Leadership

And, our parish has many resourceful and smart people!

Question 7 How would you feel/react if a favorite ministry were no longer the focus at Redeemer?

The group agreed that the current economic climate may make these kinds of decisions

a necessary part of planning. All agreed that the following criteria be followed in the decision making:

Values
Finances
Emphasis
Energy

Question 8 If you could change one thing at Redeemer, what would it be?

The music --- the group would like to sing the more traditional hymns

Socialization after 8 o'clock service
Provide opportunities for parishners to get to know one another (as we did in

our Cottage group.)
Acknowledge volunteer efforts
Provide more information to potential volunteers
A mentoring program for "new" volunteers

Cottage Meeting 6

1. HOW DID YOU COME TO BE A MEMBER AT REDEEMER? WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO US? WHAT MAKES US APPEALING NOW? WHAT MOST EXCITES YOU ABOUT OUR CHURCH?

- Looking for a place of worship - attracted by lay very active lay leadership and the fact that children were so welcomed/included at church & in the services
- Initially attended 8 am service and liked the feel ; began attending the 9:30 and loved the energy in the service and most specifically, the “shout outs”; was attracted to what was being done in J2A; like the reduced structure and informality
- Love the energy Kate has brought to our Redeemer. Along with Sabeth (and, yes, Ted too), our church is loaded with opportunities. We are most fortunate!
- Seeking a place of worship- found Redeemer welcoming to all people; was attracted to the joyous enthusiasm and the full church; loved the music
- Referred by friend; loved the music during the services and the enthusiasm of the Choir Dir. ; children involvement and education programs; folks getting up, walking around at the sign of peace, shaking hands & hugging
- Looking for a new place of worship; was attracted to the education program (all inclusive); inclusion of kids in church; since then, our J2A pilgrimage; I really like feeling so connected to the different people of Redeemer

2. WHY DO YOU COME TO WORSHIP? WHAT ABOUT WORSHIP IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO YOU? WHAT ISN'T APPEALING?

3. WHAT ABOUT REDEEMER IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO YOU?

- **APPEALING/IMPORTANT**
 - a. Liturgy team
 - b. Prayers with people's names
 - c. Glorious music. I enjoy the band but I love the music Cheryl plays and (for the most part) we sing.
 - d. Praying together/feeling of a journey together

- e. Apex of the service = standing and singing after communion. I am so moved sometimes I cry
 - f. Personalized sermons enable a real feeling of connection; also, they hold the attention of my children
 - g. Our services are just formal enough to feel intimate – working together and feeling of community
 - h. Mission and outreach programs
 - i. Redeemer people look out for each other/very supportive
 - j. Redeemer is a church where I feel I can speak freely and not be uncomfortable that you will be judged/criticized
- **NOT APPEALING/LESS IMPORTANT**
 - a. When our services become too formal, I don't feel a part of it...I drift off
 - b. Don't want to be "preached" to...
 - c. Impersonal sermons that are so technical or difficult to follow
 - d. People reading the lessons that are not prepared -- and thus read them poorly (like singing off key!)
 - e. Highly technical music that is hard to follow and even harder to sing
 - f. Parents who do not "control" their children during worship. Infants can be disruptive at times.

4. REDEEEMER HAS MANY MINISTRIES. WHAT PROGRAMS HAVE SPECIAL MEANING FOR YOU/WHY? HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF THAT PARTICULAR PROGRAM WAS PUT ASIDE FOR THE SHORT TERM? HOW WOULD YOU REACT?

- I want us to continue efforts with education and support for Youth programs (Kindergarten – Youth Group) as well as support for Youth Mission
- Adult Ed and Adult Formation – I enjoy them but would like us to stay away from the more theological topics and focus on more personal topics (such as Gifted & Called, Radical Welcome w/S. Spellors, etc.)

- We cannot be nor do all things for all people, but need to recognize and acknowledge the more senior members of our congregation and show respect for their opinions and feelings
- Music is very, very important...VERY important to me!
- Prefer the coffee hour become more central to us as a community; I want more socializing at coffee hour; sometimes I'd prefer to visit and get to know others rather than go to Adult Ed.

5. NAME ONE THING YOU WOULD CHANGE AT REDEEMER THAT YOU BELIEVE WOULD MAKE A SIGNIFICANTLY POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

- Would like more silence, e.g., at the beginning of worship --to collect my thoughts, and more time after the sermon to pray & reflect.
- Institute a program &/or find the means to get more active involvement & leadership by the greater population of our congregation; leadership efforts are currently performed by a small and limited number of people (and they are usually the same people!)
- More support must be forthcoming from the Adm. Staff. Committees need support that Emma is currently unable (due to time and workload/) to give them
- These meeting should be followed up – there needs to be a thread of continuity between Stewardship feedback and reporting on what's been done!
- Perhaps one thing that would help /encourage others to serve in leadership roles is to set limits of time on their tenure.(like 1 3-year Vestry stint)
- Emphasize the message that with a small church there are a number of opportunities into which one can get involved. we are open to all help and support
- Something MUST be done to change the “feel” of our Great Hall. It is musty, cold (linoleum!!!) and for the most part, VERY uninviting! Since it is central to socializing, it should merit priority from the Vestry & budgets.