

for July 2021

Covenant Churches Combine For A Monthly Worship Service

The Covenant Lutheran Churches will have the **FIRST** monthly **Combined Service** on July 11 at St. Mark at 10 a.m. There is NO service at Redeemer that Sunday. After the July 11 service, St. Mark will host a BBQ luncheon. All at-will donations will go to **Into the Darkness**, a suicide prevention organization, in memory of Pastor Adrian Brown. You can eat at St. Mark or meals will be available in to go containers. Each church is asked to contribute sides:

- ✝ Redeemer – Baked Beans
- ✝ Ascension – Potato Salad
- ✝ St. Mark – Desserts

Gabe Jourden will be our guest speaker at the BBQ luncheon. Gabe is on the Board for the Oklahoma chapter of **Into the Darkness**. He will be presenting stats and answering questions to help us understand what causes a person to take their own life during the luncheon.

Combined Services will be on the first Sunday of the month unless that is a holiday weekend.

- ✝ August 1- Redeemer
- ✝ **September 12** – St Mark (God's Work, Our Hands)
- ✝ October 3 – Redeemer
- ✝ November 7 – St Mark
- ✝ December 5 – Redeemer.

Pastor's Note

My idea for this first Covenant newsletter was to include a message from each Church Council, the Chair of the Consolidation Task Force, and me, about where our churches are and what we are moving toward.

Please join us at St. Mark for the July 11 service. This is an opportunity to come and to see what we are doing. We ask everyone to wear masks during the service, and to socially distance from each other.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Brian Campbell

The Assurance of Things Hoped For

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. + Hebrews 11.1.

Fifteen months to the day everything changed.

On March 11, 2020, I was leading a mid-week Lenten service at St. Mark. During the service, many of the cellphones of those in attendance began to buzz. Their friends and family were either asking them or telling them that something was going on just down Reno Avenue at the Thunder game. We found out players for the Utah Jazz tested positive for COVID-19, and the Thunder game was cancelled.

The next day, the NBA season was put on pause. By the weekend, it seemed everything else was cancelled.

We stopped in-person services a week later, and I settled into leading worship while playing music on my computer, running multiple video streams and trying to figure out how to preach to an iPhone.

At the service scheduled for March 18, we were gathering the Covenant Council to approve having monthly combined worship services. Fifteen months later, on July 11th, we will have the first monthly combined service.

A lot changed for all of us in those fifteen months.

For the Covenant Churches, we have both grown together and grown apart.

Ascension has sold their church building in Del City and is residing and worshipping at Redeemer. The two congregations are working together on some things, working individually on others.

Redeemer had worship services in their parking lot over a short-range FM transmitter, even in the freezing cold of 8:30 a.m. in December. We cautiously moved inside, first to the Fellowship Hall so we could remain socially distanced, then into the sanctuary with plastic guards up for worship leaders.

St. Mark has been having services in their sanctuary, with enough space to comply with the guidelines to stay distant.

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Things Hoped For ... continued

But before we got bored or brave enough to think about gathering in-person, many of us learned about Zoom, and streaming. **My biggest regret during the pandemic was that we couldn't get more people to engage with what we were doing online.** Our online services were not a long-term substitute for gathering together, but I believed it allowed members of the three churches to come together, if they were willing to do so. Many people got to know other people, and a lot of people were able to be helped because of the fellowship time after online services.

One of the amazing things we were able to do despite the pandemic was the BEDLAM Food Drive. Even though none of the six churches were gathering in-person for services, we collected over \$2,000 and 2,000 pounds of food for local food banks.

All through the pandemic, the Futures Task Force and the Consolidation Task Force met to talk and plan how the three Covenant Churches could combine to form one church. On page 5 of this newsletter is a proposal that all three churches will need to vote to approve and enact.

The dissolution plan that is referred to in the plan and in some of the writings from our church leaders is comparable to a person's will. It is the plan of what will happen to the assets and possessions of each church when they close as part of the combining process.

Each church decides what happens to their assets and possessions. We hope that a majority will go to the combined new church. But a church can allocate some to support programs outside of the church they have supported, or designate some funds to be used for certain ministries and activities. Ascension has approved their dissolution plan, Redeemer and St. Mark still have work to do in preparing their plan.

In my opinion, the only way for the Covenant Churches to survive in any form is to combine into one church. Doing so will allow the combined church to build upon the work that each of the Covenant churches have done, and use the resources gifted to it to reach out into the community.

The Consolidation Task Force has used **to create a diverse congregation to serve a diverse community** as a vision statement to guide their work.

That idea of having a diverse congregation going to work for diverse communities is an exciting and enticing idea. It is the type of church that people are shown to be interested in being a part of. People who are joining churches tend to do so because they want to be involved in what that church is doing.

We need to identify what of God's Work we will do as we become One Church Together For The Sake of Our Neighbor. Doing that work of sharing God's love and the Good News of Jesus Christ, combined with sharing the good news of what we are doing is the **ONLY** way we will attract new members. The rebirth of the Covenant Churches is an opportunity for the Church to grow.

Studies on growing churches show people join churches that are active in work they care about.

Our combining will give us the resources to do that.

Exactly what this new church will look like and what it will do is beyond what I can imagine. I put my faith in God that it will be a new opportunity to share our Lutheran faith in a community that needs to hear it.

I invite you to be a part of the re-creation of our churches. Join us in worship on July 11th to experience what a worship service combining the best of all three Covenant churches can be. If you can't join us then, please come back to your church and help guide its future and its legacy.

God Bless You, Pastor Brian Campbell

Share Our Social Media

You share the Good News when you share our Social Media posts by sharing who we are, what we do, and what we are about.

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Greetings from Redeemer

Hello Church

I hope this letter finds you all well. I have been asked to update you on how our church is going. So here it goes. We at Redeemer are working hard to get back to church safely. We have marked seating to help with social distancing. We have spaced the communion cups so that you will not accidentally touch someone else's cup. We share peace differently. Our members have worked together to help anyone who wants to get vaccine find out where to go. And we still wear our masked to protect each other.

So, what do we need to do now to get our members back? If you know the answer to that question, please give me a call. I love to talk and would love to talk to you.

We are in the process of consolidating and have a Congregational question and answer session July 25. We will be voting on the Consolidating Task Force recommendations August 8. If you live in the digital world and want a copy sooner, then I will be mailing them out let me know.

Ascension Update

When Pastor asked us to write this article, I truly didn't know what to say. I will give it a try. I hope we have kept everyone informed about our consolidation steps.

Over the past 3 years, through congregational meetings, council meetings and talking to people, we have accomplished a lot! We discussed and approved the consolidation plan, selling of our church building and property, blending with Redeemer, and the dissolution plan.

We have accomplished a lot, but we have a long way yet to go! The benefits of blending with Redeemer and St. Mark are great! We hope everyone gets on the consolidation train to become one. 1+1+1=1! With God as our director and leader, we can make this happen!!!

Yours, Gloria Blankinship, Ascension Council President

I want to leave you with the LaTesa's version of Psalm 23:

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

God has provided all we need.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me besides quiet waters.

This represents our church and the comfort we get from being in a place we know.

He restores my soul.

Just by knowing he is God, I get peace.

He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

This is Consolidation because there is no need to be this close and not be together.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

It should say we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. We need to concentrate on the movement through to see what God has in store for us.

I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

If God is with us, who should we fear.

Your rod and your Staff, they comfort me.

If we don't get it right no worries God will correct us and let us try again.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

When our enemies see God work, they are coming to our side. Are we ready for growth??

You anoint my head with oil: my cup overflows.

God have given us everything we need our cup is overflowing. Can we see it??

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

He didn't name Redeemer, Ascension, or St. Mark in that Verse.

With Love, LaTesa Williams, Redeemer President

St Mark Mid-Year Update

As we have reached the mid-year point for 2021, we have made some great strides and have many wonderful things to look forward to. We have our first Monthly combined worship service on July 11th, and we will have one every month as we refine our combined worship experience. There is already amazing collaboration happening in taking the best that each of our three congregations has to offer, so our new combined experience can be special for all of us.

When we focus on our work at serving our community the efforts to support Positive Tomorrows, Great Strides, Other Options, SISU, the Mid Del food pantry, Meals on Wheels, the St Mark and Rose State Blessing Boxes are all still running and are a constant opportunity for all of us to share God's Blessing with our community. Our building is still being appreciated as a healing place for AA, two Al-Anon groups, and a DBSA programs that keep growing. I am so excited to see how full our parking lot can become during their meeting times. We have also added a TOPS program to activities happening in our Building.

As we move forward it is important that each member shares their thoughts on these and any other programs that might serve our community better. The next thing we need to work on sharing together is how we can more frequently come together in worship. Your thoughts on how we can improve attendance and engagement are greatly appreciated. Please share any ideas with Pastor Brian and myself as they will be greatly appreciated.

The Final piece of news that I would like to communicate is that in preparation for our combining into one worshipping body, the ST Mark WELCA has voted to dissolve their program and use some of their savings to pay off the Mortgage at St Mark. We will end the summer with no Mortgage as the result of these ladies years of hard work. They will also be sending financial support to community programs like Positive tomorrows and SISU. I stay in amazement at how our ladies have always found new ways at sharing their gifts with our community to show Gods love in action.

Thank you from a humbled friend.
James Burkhart, St. Mark Council President

Consolidation Task Force News

Hello from your Consolidation Task Force.

The members of Ascension, Redeemer and St. Mark Lutheran Churches have been collaborating together for seven or eight years now; first for a pastor to serve the three churches, then with a Futures Task Force to gauge where we believed God was calling us and now with a Consolidation Task Force to guide us, with a lot of help from God, to one new church, serving Christ with a blended congregation.

What brought us to the table was money. None of the three churches had enough to go it alone. What has kept us at the table is the exciting possibilities of what one blended, multicultural congregation could do in the eastern Oklahoma County area.

The Consolidation Task Force has produced a report and ballot for each of the three churches to vote on soon. The document also recommends steps that are needed to finalize the union of the three into one new named church that will be the presence of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America here. We will be one church with three histories and a blended service style that represents those traditions.

These combined worship services are a further chance for us all to get to know each other better and refine our combined style. I'm really looking forward to these services and get-togethers.

Bill Carr, Chairperson, Consolidation Task Force

Join Us Online For Sunday Worship

You can watch our services online on these streams.

You can watch Combined Services or services at Redeemer / Ascension on **Zoom**. Just before the service, Open your computer browser to: www.zoom.us, or open the Zoom app. Click "Join a meeting" enter ID 826-8005-0795/ 763652.

You can watch any service on the Facebook page for the church by finding the live stream on the appropriate page.

For services at **Redeemer**, Open your computer browser to: Facebook.com/RedeemerLutheranOKC.

For services at **St. Mark**, open your computer browser to: Facebook.com/StMarkMWC.

For **Combined Services**, open your computer browser to: Facebook.com/CLOKCDotChurch.

Consolidation Task Force's Proposal

The Vision statement to guide the work of the Consolidation Task Force: ***"To create a diverse congregation to serve a diverse community."***

The Consolidation Task Force recommends the following for consideration by voters of the Covenant congregations. A **two-thirds majority** vote of qualified voting members who are present and voting at a legally called meeting of the congregation is required to accept this proposal. (Proposal is in **bold print**, with a brief explanation following each point.)

Recommended Actions to be Taken During the Phase-In Period

During the phase-in period, each congregation will:

1. Continue to worship as a separate congregation, except for joint services approved by the Covenant Council. Meeting in one facility full time can occur prior to consolidation if desired by the congregations.
2. Approve and begin to implement their plan of dissolution.
3. Review their current ministries and evaluate which should be continued in the emerging congregation.
4. Celebrate the history of their congregation and its members. Determine significant items, dates to celebrate, congregation traditions, etc. that should be continued in the emerging congregation to preserve the heritage of the congregation.
5. **Recruit, recruit!!** The ONLY way that our consolidated church will survive is if we get young people and families in the door. It is also essential to encourage current members of the consolidating congregations to transfer their membership to the emerging congregation.
6. Select members to serve on committees for the emerging congregation:
 - a. The **Mission and Ministry Committee** will plan the work of the emerging congregation and the proclamation of the Good News.

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PROPOSAL

1. ***The initial operating location for the consolidated church will be 7501 E Reno Ave, Midwest City (currently the home of St. Mark) due to the age, size and amenities of this location.***
It is understood and noted that while this facility has the most up-to-date features, it is over 25 years old and will require some updates and maintenance to remain operational. The consolidated congregation will determine, at a later date, if this is the best site for the church's planned ministry activities.
2. ***Each congregation will contribute a minimum of \$2,500 to meet legal fees associated with dissolution of the three congregations and incorporation of the emerging congregation.***
These funds will be held in the account established for the Covenant Congregations, with expenditures approved by the Covenant Council, after consultation with the Consolidation Task Force.
3. ***Each congregation will include in their dissolution plan a goal of contributing approximately 90% of their final net worth at the time of closure to the emerging congregation.***
A congregation may designate/allocate some of their final net worth for specific missions and church activities for the combined church to adopt. In the case of Ascension and Redeemer, most of these funds will arise from sale of the property and equipment, plus existing cash reserves. St. Mark would meet this requirement by transfer of property to the emerging congregation; other assets will be distributed according to the St. Mark dissolution plan.
4. ***If all three congregations approve this plan of consolidation, there will be a "phase-in period" of six months before the new congregation is incorporated; this time period may be extended if needed.***
Actions to be taken by the consolidating congregations during this period are suggested below.
5. ***If any congregation fails to adopt this consolidation plan, approval of the other congregations becomes null and void.***
Consideration of a revised consolidation plan will be referred back to the Consolidation Task Force.

Phase In Period Steps ... continued

- b. The **Property Committee** will determine maintenance required on the St. Mark facility. It will also determine which items of office equipment, worship, fellowship, music, etc. from the consolidating congregations would be most beneficial to the emerging congregation.
- c. The **Finance Committee** will evaluate the funds that are likely to be available for the emerging congregation and develop a budget for initial operation of the consolidated congregation. Appropriate accounts for the anticipated needs of the emerging congregation should be planned.
- d. The **Constitution and Bylaws Committee** will develop recommendations for the constitution and bylaws for the emerging congregation. The constitution will include all current required provisions of the ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations. The Consolidation Task Force has determined that other provisions in the constitution and bylaws of the consolidating congregations were similar and could be easily integrated.
- e. The **Worship and Music Committee** will continue to work on blending worship traditions. This committee will also determine whether one or two Sunday services should be held.

Final Consolidation Process Steps

After the “phase-in” period has passed, consolidated worship at the St. Mark facility will commence. At this time, the voting members of the emerging congregation will:

1. Incorporate the emerging congregation
2. Approve the constitution and bylaws
3. Elect the congregation council
4. Establish ministries within the congregation and in the community

The consolidating congregations of Ascension, Redeemer, and St. Mark may find it necessary to remain temporarily as independent corporations after consolidation in order to dispose of their assets and complete their plans of dissolution.

Covenant Lutheran Oklahoma City Churches

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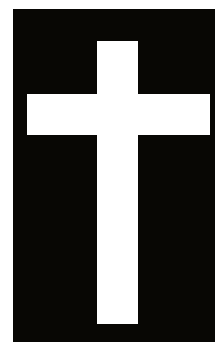
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ONE CHURCH
TOGETHER
FOR THE SAKE OF
OUR NEIGHBOR.**