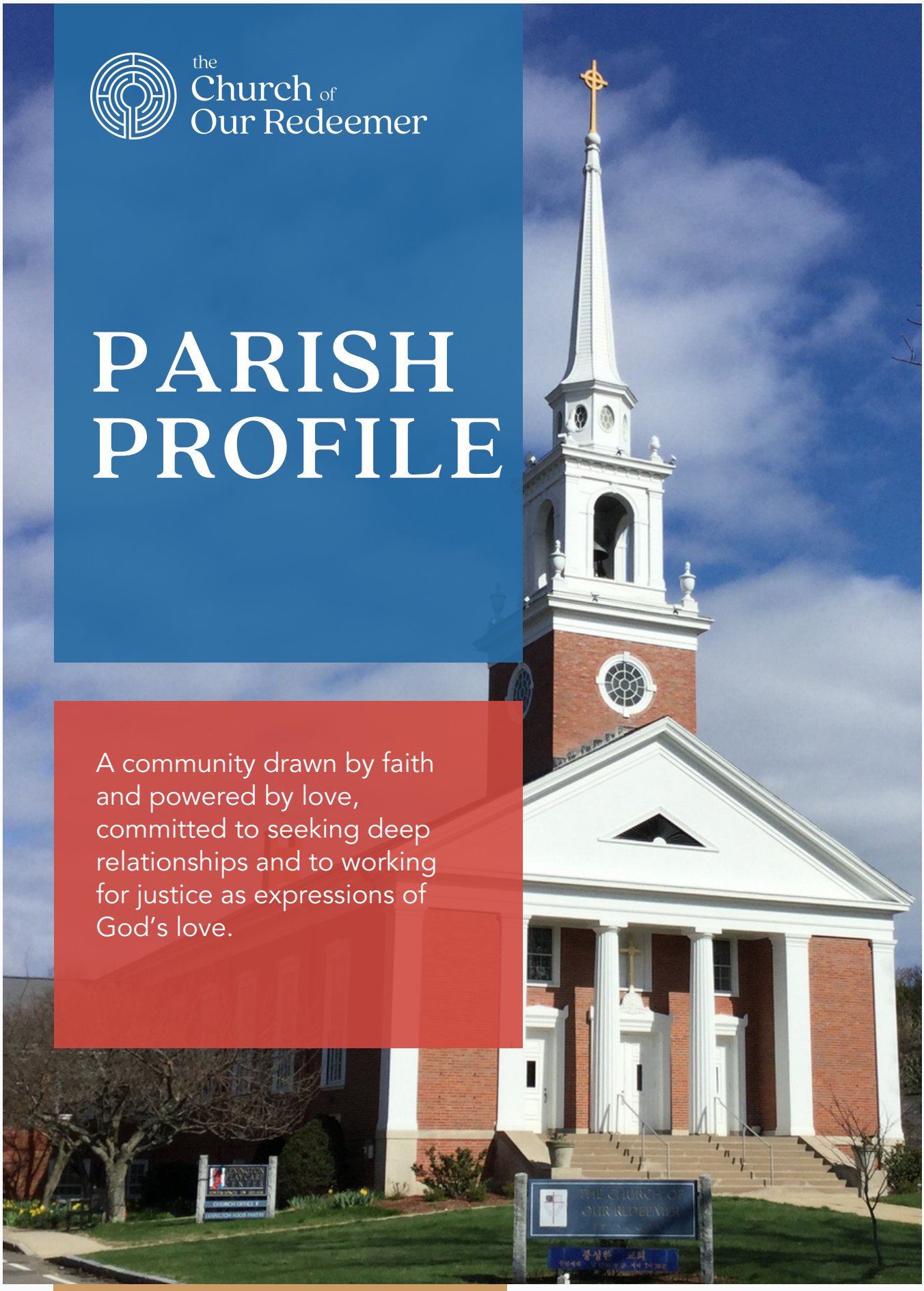
the Church of Our Redeemer

PARISH PROFILE

A community drawn by faith and powered by love, committed to seeking deep relationships and to working for justice as expressions of God's love.



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INTRODUCTION

It began with some basic maintenance decisions. But at Redeemer, what could have been seen as a problem, or a simple administrative matter, was instead seen as an opportunity.

In the fall of 2019, we were considering what to do about a few cracked floor tiles and an increasingly troubled organ. But rather than picking out new flooring, the Worship Committee embarked on an enthusiastic exploration of what a worship space could be, leading the parish in a series of "worship experiments." We moved the altar to new places, temporarily placed a screen to visualize a potential wall, and even worshiped in our newly renovated basement Great Hall to try out worship in the round.



At Christmas, we hosted our 13th annual holiday party for the Grow Clinic at Boston Medical Center, providing gifts, food, and even rock music and carols by Highway 49, Redeemer's volunteer band. Christmas Eve featured an overflowing afternoon service with children's pageant and evening service full of beautiful choir music, both preceded by carol sings.

Life at Redeemer was good, but life was full, and as we approached Lent of 2020, our rector knew that volunteers and especially lay leaders needed a break.

So many hardworking parishioners, involved in so many ways with the church's ministries, were getting burned out. So for Lent, our rector and Vestry declared a Sabbath.

Boy, did we have a Sabbath.



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The Boston area has significant numbers of people in industries like medicine and science research and was among the first places nationwide to shut down for Covid. The church did not hesitate—on March 15, we had our first service by laptop. By Holy Week, we recorded the Passion reading from the then-unfamiliar squares of a Zoom meeting.

Within two months, we had a new lay ministry—Tech Team, which installed a new camera for a better view from the balcony and streamed high-quality services via Facebook Live and the church website. They coordinated acolytes lighting candles on their dining room tables, readers Zooming in from their studies, and choir members recording their voices at home to be woven together for anthems, played over slideshows of parishioners' recent pilgrimages to the Holy Land or pictures of Redeemer in springtime.

That August, our assistant rector of 7 years was called to his first rectorship. We said goodbye the only way we safely could, with a car parade in the church parking lot. Seven months later, we welcomed Mother Emily Garcia as our new assistant, just in time for Holy Week.

Then in the summer of 2021, our rector of 12 years was called to another parish. And here— perhaps—is where you enter the story.

REDEEMER TIMELINE

1887- Consecrated as a Parish

1937-1972
REV. HAROLD HANLEY - 14TH RECTOR

1970's
Church of Our Redeemer
1st Female Senior Warden in Diocese
Senior Warden starts leading Vestry Meetings

1973-1984
REV. TED PATTERSON - 15TH RECTOR

1986-2003
REV. ALDEN FLANDERS - 16TH RECTOR

1990's
Food Pantry born
Rent to School
Cell Tower added to Steeple

2000's
Atrium born
Annual Parish Retreat Started
Memorial Garden & Labyrinth

2005-2009
REV. TRICIA DEBEER - 17TH RECTOR

2009-2021
REV. KATE EKREM - 18TH RECTOR

2010's
Capital Campaign for Great Hall renovation
Soft Space for Kids
Hired current Music Director
LexEat born



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WHO YOU ARE

You are a faith-filled priest who shows by word and example how Christianity is relevant in today's world. You preach sermons that speak to a range of people on how to live a godly life, integrating and applying scripture, tradition and reason; and responding to contemporary intellectual challenges to Christianity in an informed and rational manner.

You have a strong sense of the traditions of the Episcopal Church, and at the same time, energy and excitement for experimentation and ideas about what the church of the future could look like.



You are committed to living out the Christian message of social justice, and you also value spiritual practices aimed at deepening the individual's communion with and experience of God. Your own love, humility, and confidence flow from your trusting relationship with God grounded in your personal practice of prayer.

You are a leader who brings out the best in people, helping them identify their spiritual gifts so that they can use them effectively in the church and in their lives. You bring people together with a strong spirit of welcome and collaboration, deliberately including and engaging marginalized people. You are energized by collaboration and working with a team; you believe in and support lay leadership in all aspects of parish life.

REDEEMER TEAM

RECTOR	ASSISTANT RECTOR	PARISH ADMINISTRATOR	MUSIC DIRECTOR	SEXTON	LAY LEADERSHIP
Rev. Ginger Solaqua	**Rev. Emily García**	**Ellen Weene**	**Dr. Bernadette Colley**	**Roy McHoul**	**Murray Daniels / Sarah Conrad**
Interim Rector	3/4 Time	3/4 Time	3/5 Time	Part-time	Sr. & Jr. Warden

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WHO WE ARE

We are a community drawn by faith and powered by love, committed to seeking deep relationships and to working for justice as expressions of God's love.

We are both cradle Episcopalians and Christians of many backgrounds who have found our way here and stayed for the beauty of the liturgy, the closeness of the community, and the energy and excitement we have found.

We are active in using our gifts to support our church and improve Lexington and surrounding communities. Our strong spirit of welcome and collaboration includes a deliberate awareness of our efforts to include and engage marginalized people.

Loving God, who calls us to restore unity and justice, your son Jesus teaches us that love brings us together in a community where all are welcome. Help us deepen our faith and relationships so that we can grow our community to make a difference within and beyond ourselves, through Jesus Christ Our Redeemer. Amen.

~ Our Collect for the Parish, written at Annual Meeting, January 2019



A fall 2022 survey of the parish asked members about the level of commitment and energy they feel, as well as their satisfaction around various aspects of parish life. The responses indicated that for all Covid's challenges, we are still essentially who we remembered ourselves to be. Parishioners expressed strong commitment and energy, and the results showed a community highly hospitable and high in morale, with great confidence in our parish governance and the ability to take on the challenges we face.

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OUR CHILDREN & YOUTH

WHAT THEY LIKE ABOUT REDEEMER:

- Receiving Communion
- Participating at the altar
- Singing - Atrium Singers
- Serving as acolytes
- Different types of music
- Easter Vigil
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Christmas
- Blessing of the Animals
- Outdoor Services
- Parties after church
- Cookies and Carols



WHAT THEY WANT IN A NEW RECTOR:

- **Someone who enjoys ALL people!**

"Someone who takes in everybody—everybody is the star of the show."
"Someone who likes the shameless gusto of youth engagement."
"Must support the gays. And all the queers. No Racists please"
"Someone who understands that the kids in the back [soft space] are part of us—they're important."

- **Someone who is FUN!**

"Able to have fun in some contexts; who will not be a flop on the Parish Retreat."
"Makes corny jokes"
"Someone who generally thinks positively."

- **Someone who LISTENS to their ideas for the future of Redeemer.**

"More coloring sheets for the soft space."
"Maybe the acolytes could sit somewhere they could see better."
"A service on the labyrinth, where you pray as you turn and say a prayer in the center."
"More music, more singing during the service."
"Use hymnals and prayerbooks instead of printing inserts every week."
"Get stained glass windows, or make one stained glass each season with temporary filters."

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WHERE WE'RE FROM

Lexington is a proudly historic suburb of Boston—on any given Sunday, at the visitors' center next-door to our church, you might find Minutemen mustering to the tune of a fife, or (on an icy December day) burning tea. The town's exemplary public schools hold "embracing a Revolutionary spirit" as a core value—embracing innovation and progressive values. Redeemer, in its own way, also has a spirit of innovation and adaptability.



Our parish draws members from Lexington as well as several surrounding towns, from nearby Belmont to as far as Carlisle and Chelmsford, as well as the nearby Hanscom Air Force Base.

Lexington is vibrant, affluent, and highly educated, with outstanding public services, a walkable downtown, convenient location for accessing Boston, and one of the very best public school systems in the state.





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Two powerful forces have transformed the town over the last 20 years. One has been the growth of the technology industries—and other knowledge industries—in and around us. Lexington has always been an attractive town for those who work and teach at the more than 100 local colleges and universities, but the global economic shifts have accelerated the movement of families valuing high-quality public education. One result has been a huge increase in the cost of housing. Median home prices in 2022 were around 1.4 million dollars.

The obvious affluence of our town somewhat obscures, but does not eliminate, important social challenges that exist, to which we try to respond as a parish. Housing prices pressure residents on fixed incomes. Food insecurity is real, with the Interfaith Food Pantry serving 100 families each week.

The globalization of the knowledge economy has also resulted in rapid demographic changes in town. Twenty years ago the population was over 85 percent white. Today residents from east and south Asia make up 25 percent of the population, with the public schools having an even higher level of diversity. Our congregation, although somewhat diverse, does not reflect the town as a whole.

WHAT WE DO

A. WORSHIP & MUSIC



Our Covid story is a classic Redeemer story of adaptability rooted in our values. Before Covid, aside from a basic PA system we deliberately did not use much technology in support of worship. But within hours of learning about the impending lockdown, thanks to information shared from another parish in the diocese, we gained a basic mastery of Zoom. Without missing a Sunday, the clergy was streaming a basic Morning Prayer service from the sanctuary using a laptop on a music stand. We were worshiping together in real time.

There was a strong desire to reduce the burden of this set-up on the clergy, and to allow parishioners to participate as they always had. We wanted to incorporate music and get back to celebrating the Eucharist. We wanted a worship experience more akin to what we had before.

We worship rooted in the beauty of the Anglican and Episcopal liturgies. In addition to the books we keep in our pews—the Book of Common Prayer, the Hymnal 1982 and Lift Every Voice & Sing—we use material from the New Zealand Prayer Book and hymns from many sources, and we often try out new ways of worshiping together—while remaining true to accepted Episcopal traditions. For those who prefer the traditional language, we also offer a small Rite I service every month.

The rector, assistant rector, music director and lay Worship Committee meet together monthly to plan special services and discuss aspects of worship, from moving services outside (weather permitting) for the entirety of summer 2022 and all of the details that entailed, to the decision four years ago to move the Passion reading from Palm Sunday to Good Friday. In addition to the Worship Committee and Altar Guild, we are supported by a Liturgy Team of lay ministers who cycle out month by month to greet, read lessons, serve at the Eucharist, and more. Even during Covid, we kept this lay participation via Zoom as much as possible, and we continue to make it possible for remote readers to read "in" church. We continue to stream our services while also working hard to make our sanctuary safe and accessible to the most vulnerable.





Incorporating children in worship is a high value for our parish. In our 'soft space,' young children are welcome to play while taking in the service, and in December 2022, we were able to resume a treasured Redeemer tradition—inviting all children to gather around the altar for the Eucharist, up close where they can see. We have an active acolyte program, with up to three children serving weekly.

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We frequently incorporate fun, celebratory elements into our main service, with bell-ringing at Easter, pinwheels and confetti cannons at Pentecost, annual blessings of backpacks and bicycles, and (every other year) a blessing of our animals! (In October 2022, pets returned to the sanctuary for the first time since 2018!)







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Our dedicated adult choir leads us in worship and offers complex and interesting anthems, including songs in a variety of languages, such as Latin, French, German and Swahili. The richness of the music program is especially impressive given the small size of our choir, which has struggled to attract younger members. All Sunday School students age 6 to 11 are part of our Children's Choir. Our music director brings in guest musicians throughout the year for special services, from a Celtic band to celebrate Creation Care Sunday to a Renaissance band or harpist to share Advent Lessons & Carols and a chamber string quartet on Christmas Eve.











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B. CHRISTIAN FORMATION







Redeemer's Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program, part of formation since 2000, draws Episcopalians from several surrounding towns as an outstanding children's formation program. Our dedicated Atrium teachers lead children as young as 3 in questioning and learning, with the belief that the true teacher is the Holy Spirit. The carefully prepared, Montessori-inspired environment provides opportunities to learn from God in relationship. The three Atria take children through sixth grade.

Older youth participate in the Journey to Adulthood program. In two years of Rite 13, pre-teens take their first steps in the transition away from their families into their own lives—within a supportive environment rooted in God. At the annual Rite 13 ceremonies, the community celebrates with the teens and their families their passage from childhood to adulthood. In J2A, youth spend an additional two years deepening their understanding of self, society, and spirituality and applying their faith to all areas of their life as they develop into full, active adult participants in the church. Prior to Covid, the highlight of the J2A program was a pilgrimage for each two-year cohort, which also included active fundraising by the teens to support their goal. The first three groups traveled to South Dakota, Zion Canyon and Acadia National Park. During Covid, our teens went camping and hiking together at forested locations within driving distance of town. Teens from grades 8 through 12 meet weekly for food and fellowship with our small but engaged Youth Group.







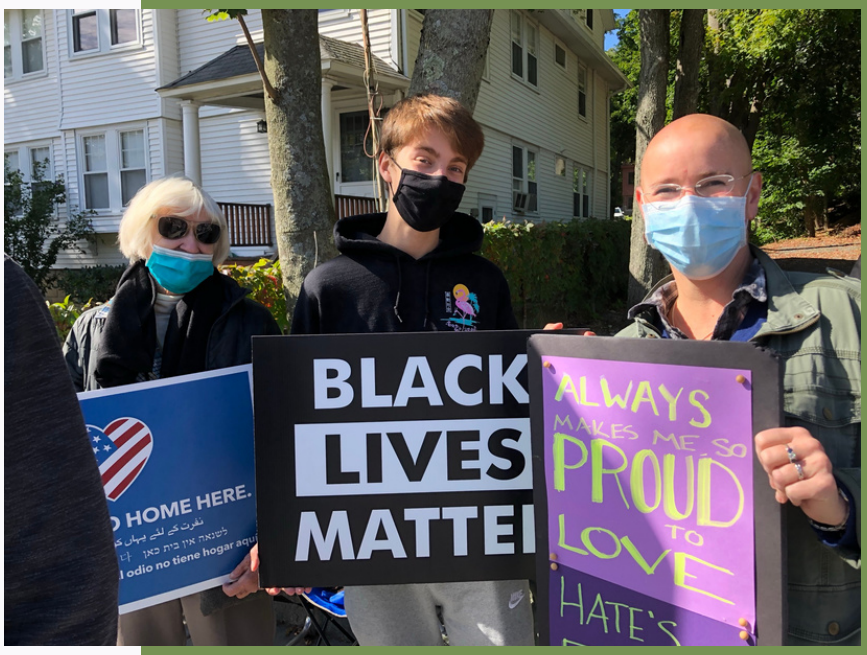
Prior to Covid, we frequently offered adult formation presentations and discussions following coffee hour. Our last rector brought us the Education for Ministry (EfM) program in 2011, and we have graduated 26 parishioners. During Covid, a newly formed Adult Formation Committee planned and led a year of weekly Zoom programming after the service, starting with conversations that allowed people to interact and process how the pandemic was affecting them and moving into presentations on topics of interest, including trauma, grief and loss, a different kind of Advent, and God in Science.

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C. SOCIAL ACTION

Redeemer holds a strong commitment to addressing the brokenness of the world. Through our Social Action Committee, we seek to be Christ's heart and hands in the world in partnership with others. Our experience has been that spiritual growth and mission activities feed each other, and that mission builds our parish community.

People bring their own passions and spirits to this work, and we support organizations that members are passionate about, focusing on hunger and homelessness, and the education and wellbeing of children. Most recently, we have developed an additional focus on anti-racist efforts both within and outside our parish. Since Redeemer is not large, we seek to partner with other organizations over many years to create sustainability in our commitments.



> "It's who we are. We take care of Redeemer and in some small way, the world around us."

We have long had a strong emphasis on Micah's injunction to "act justly and love mercy" in a way that is deeply relational. We pursue mission to be in relationship with—not just in service to—others, especially those who are different from ourselves. We seek to apply our anti-racism awareness to the relationships with our mission partners and intentionally engage with the communities we serve to ensure we are meeting their needs, and not imposing our own expectations.

Before Covid, we sent a work group to St. Christopher's Episcopal Mission of the Navajoland Diocese in Southern Utah, as well as regular work teams to support Essex County Habitat for Humanity. We sent volunteer science fair judges to Esperanza Academy, an entirely donation-funded private school providing a quality education to middle-school girls in the nearby city of Lawrence.

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Redeemer provides a monthly supper at Bristol Lodge Soup Kitchen and supports the interfaith efforts of LexEAT Together, a not-for-profit that grew out of a conversation between parishioners in an EfM class. Our Great Hall hosts the Lexington Interfaith Food Pantry, which is directed by a parishioner and is a "hot" option for Lexington High School students seeking to satisfy their mandatory community service hours. As mentioned, each December Redeemer serves as the primary supporter for the holiday party for families at the Grow Clinic, a failure-to-thrive clinic at Boston Medical Center.

In 2018, two dozen parishioners participated in a diocesan program called Liberating Ourselves From Racism, which led to the formation of Redeemer's Racial Equity Action Group. In its first year, four group members joined with two other Lexingtonians to develop and launch a nonsectarian course that would get white Lexingtonians talking with other white Lexingtonians about white supremacy. Dismantling Racism In Our Town, a 7-week course, launched in the fall of 2019, and during its second (spring) session, pivoted to Zoom. The course continues and has been sought out by several leaders in our town government and education system. In June 2020, at the first Vestry meeting following the murder of George Floyd, our Vestry voted unanimously to support REAG's request to install a Black Lives Matter banner on the church property, and REAG members did the work to make that happen in a matter of weeks. The banner remains a sign and a reminder of our ongoing work.



While working for racial equity in the world, we have also looked inward; the Vestry, specifically, has worked to root out the characteristics of white supremacy in its meetings and work. Both the Social Action and Racial Equity Action ministries offer regular invitations for the larger parish community to learn more about and contribute to their work.

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COOR - SERVICE









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COOR - FELLOWSHIP











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D. FELLOWSHIP & FUN

While remote worship has been a big success for Redeemer, we really missed gathering in person; we are a close-knit parish that is strengthened personally and spiritually when we gather, and we have a lot of fun together! From weekly coffee hours to big parish breakfasts and cookouts, we share food and fellowship regularly. For two years before Covid—and restarted in Fall 2022—we have had a thriving dinner group program, "Dinner for Eight," in which we gather in each others' homes and get to know each other at a much deeper level.

Every fall since 2004, we have taken a weekend-long retreat at the Barbara C. Harris Camp in New Hampshire. After missing 2020, we adapted in 2021 from a weekend away to a weekend "at home," at the parish—to be, worship, and play together outside. In fall of 2022, we returned to the Barbara C. Harris Camp.







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In June 2017, we launched "Camp Redeemer" after church to encourage families to keep coming in the normally quiet summer, with tie-dye, lawn games, and the highlight—a weekly Slip-N-Slide! (It's no longer called "Camp Redeemer," but the Slip-N-Slide returned this summer after a Covid pause.) Since 2014 (with a few years of Covid break), we've even had a parish pool party every August hosted by a long-time Redeemer family (with music by Highway 49!).

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OUR ASSETS

A. PROPERTY

Redeemer was consecrated as a parish in 1887 in a building across from our current location. Our building has been serving Redeemer since 1957, with an education wing added in the mid-1960s in response to the rapid postwar growth of the congregation.

In 2008, the church added a memorial garden and stone labyrinth outside, which are open and welcoming to the public. For many years, we also used our land to have a small garden that supplied vegetables to the Food Pantry.

In 2015, after a successful capital campaign, we completed a renovation of the building's non-worship spaces to support our values of community and service. The initial spur was replacing the elevator to make the entire building accessible, and expanded to include making the Great Hall more attractive and functional for both the parish and community groups like AA and the Food Pantry. New folding walls now allow the room to be subdivided and the incorporated screen and projector technology made the space both more usable for church meetings and more "rentable" by community groups.



Great Hall

We have maintained a rectory since the mid-1920s; the current home was purchased in 2008. It is a four-bedroom mid-century modern design, located in a desirable neighborhood in the southeast portion of town. It is about 3 miles from the church, near our local farm stand, and near the bike path and bus routes that connect Bedford to the west with Cambridge to the east.

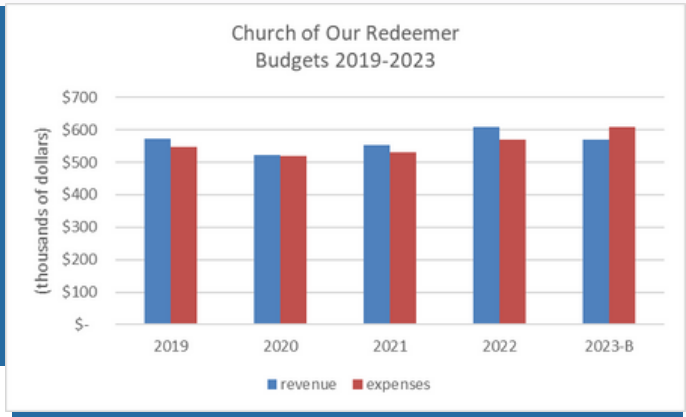


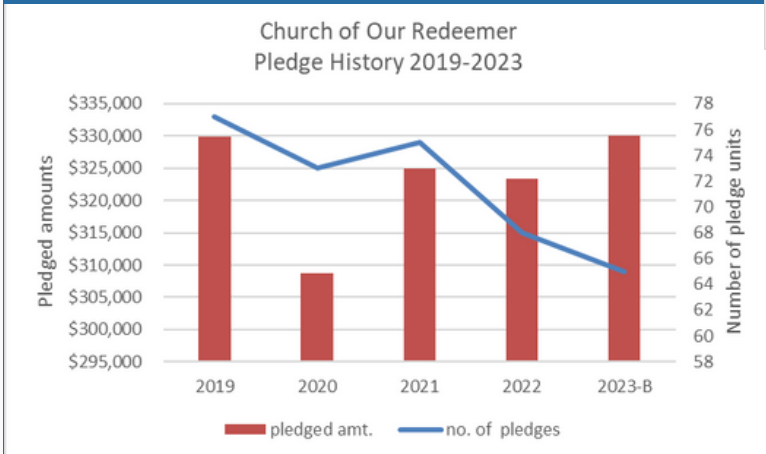
Rectory

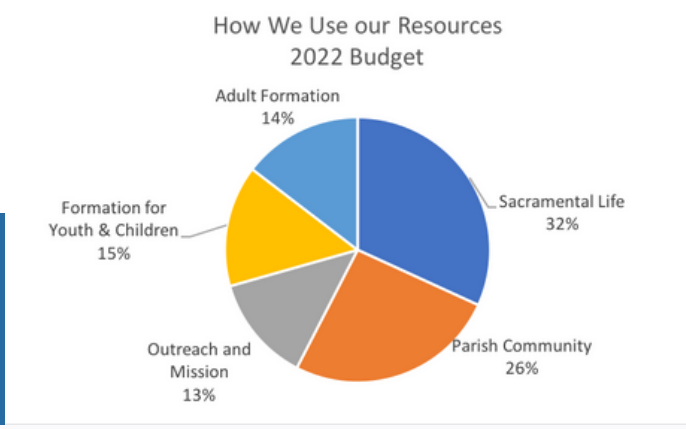
B. FINANCES

Our church is blessed with a generous membership and a history of good stewardship of its resources. Gifts from pledges and other offerings provide about two-thirds of our operating budget. We receive rental income from several sources, including: an independent preschool, use of our parking lot by the Town, cell tower units in the steeple and casual rentals. These revenues cover the operating costs of maintaining our buildings. In each of the last four years, the parish has had a budget surplus, although in each year, a budget was approved that was balanced or slightly in deficit. A projected budget deficit for 2023 reflects some changes in rental income in this year. Significantly, giving by members remains strong, despite decline in the numbers of pledges in recent years. In addition, the parish has over $700,000 in its endowment funds.

How we use our resources reflects our values. We devote about one-third of our budget to our worship together, one-third to caring for our community and for the world, and one-third to growing our faith.







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OUR DREAMS & CHALLENGES

We began with the story of our sanctuary, and making those specific improvements remains a necessity for us in the near future, though we have not committed to when. The parish has not addressed the issue of the aging organ since before Covid; that is a decision process we will go through with our next rector. We felt three years ago that any big changes should reflect our values—of inclusion, flexibility, and openness to the community—and we look forward to continuing that conversation. We hope to find a new rector who is excited about the possibility of being part of this project, especially in the sharing of ideas around what a worship space can be and do.







Like all churches, we are eager to grow, as a long-term decline in overall membership has been exacerbated by Covid. Forty years ago, Redeemer reported average Sunday attendance of 200 worshipers; twenty years ago that number was about 170. Pre-Covid we had about 112. Today average in-person attendance is around 70-75, with about 35 in virtual attendance. Covid hurt in a lot of ways. Our strong Atrium program for children and youth formation was profoundly disrupted; weakening what has long been a powerful link for families. "Remoteness" limited the opportunities for new members of the community to walk in the door; as a result, the number of members leaving (through death or departure) exceeded the number of new members. And it weakened the ties for existing members on the margins. Still, we have had several new families join us in the past year and are looking for leadership in how to sustain and improve that growth.







The same church culture that leads us to deep thinking and thoughtful questioning can also tend to have shortcomings of seeming impersonal and hard to approach. We need a rector who shares our passion for intellectual exploration but also knows how to make parishioners feel warmly welcomed—and who will lead us in strengthening that community-building aspect of our church culture. Zoom "coffee hour," which was offered almost every week for the first pandemic year, was one of our most improbable Covid success stories. Carefully checking in with each "square" in the meeting helped us get to know people we might never have spoken with before and made sure even brand-new parishioners weren't left out of the discussion.

Community partnership remains a high value for this parish. Our key principle of being in relationship with our partners has been a challenge over the last three years. We haven't been able to send a group to St. Christopher's, have a Habitat work day, or run our annual Patriots Day pancake breakfast (for visitors to the early-morning American Revolution reenactments on the nearby Battle Green), which in the past has supported the Lexington Refugee Assistance Program. We look forward to greater communication with and engagement from the entire parish community as we work intentionally to renew our relationships moving forward. But we also recognize that people are stretched right now and re-evaluating how they want to be spending their time. We may need to "lay down" some things as part of our growth. We need a rector who can help us evaluate how much bandwidth we have and how best to allocate not just our funds but our volunteer power to make the most impact.





Maintaining our online presence, as both a resource for our community and a small element of evangelism, has become part of our parish goals. Our more substantial and interactive online presence is opening our "doors" to a whole new set of possibilities we have yet to fully realize or even envision. We continue to stream Sunday services, Mother Emily has brought us to Instagram, and our parish administrator keeps our website and Facebook page up-to-date. Our next rector should be aware of the importance of the online aspect of our offerings.

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In the last several years we have changed our assistant rector, rector, and parish administrator (several times), and on a personal level, we have lost both parishioners and family members. We have had to change several times how we "do church" to meet the changing world, and we expect that those changes are likely to continue. We need a rector who can be wise and caring in managing those changes with us. Our last rector taught us an important lesson about working through conflict: that whatever issue we were trying to work through, it was usually not a problem to be solved, but a polarity to be managed. That was so often true, especially when it came to personal preferences around music or worship style. One position was not right and the other wrong; rather we were being challenged to strike a delicate balance. As we consider redesigning our worship space, make decisions around regathering, and adjust our worship as needed to continue meeting the needs of this unprecedented moment and the new parishioners we hope to draw, we need a rector who can hold that same sense of balance. Christianity itself may be on the cusp of profound change, and we seek a pastor who is willing to lead us, not only to acknowledge that need for change but also to engage meaningfully with preparations to change.







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CONCLUSION

In February 2020, the plan had been to use the Lenten season to prayerfully consider what to "pick back up" after Easter. Instead, we have found ourselves in a liminal place, waiting to know not only what to pick back up, but when. It is unclear when pandemic life will truly end or what life will look like on the other side of that—and we're struggling with the waiting this requires. But we face this moment with hope, trust and the energy to pursue answers. We're looking for a leader to join us in this work of asking and answering. At heart, we are still seeking to answer the questions we have been asking for many years: What does the church of the future look like? And what could that mean for us?







RESOURCES

A. LEXINGTON, MA COMMUNITY & POPULATION DATA

Lexington Town Government, Schools, Etc.

Lexington Public Schools 2022 District Report Card

Lexington population data

Book: Lexington: From Liberty's Birthplace to Progressive Suburb (Making of America)

B. EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS

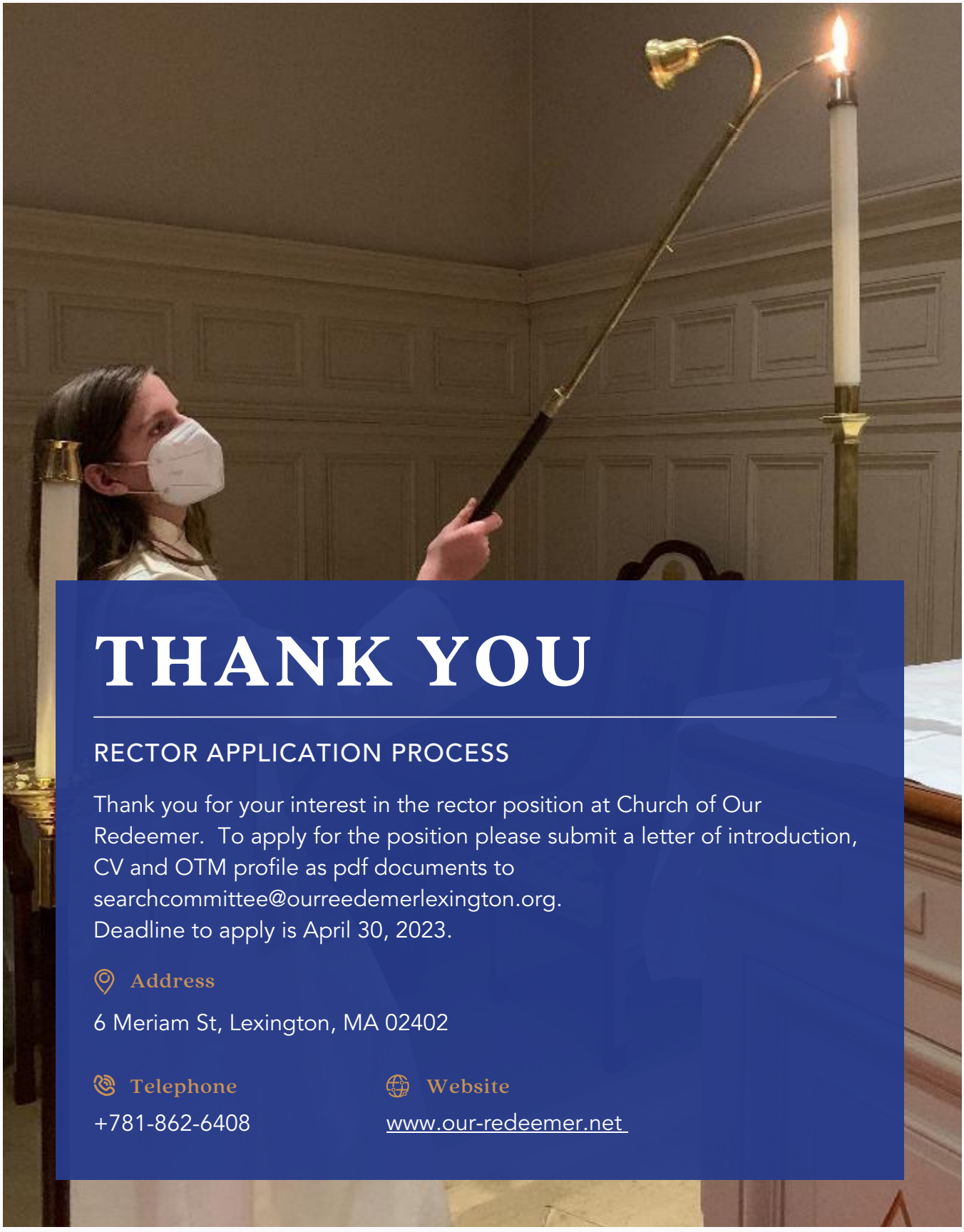
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

C. CHURCH OF OUR REDEEMER, LEXINGTON, MA

Church of Our Redeemer Homepage

Church of Our Redeemer-COVID Precautions/Regathering Information

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THANK YOU

RECTOR APPLICATION PROCESS

Thank you for your interest in the rector position at Church of Our Redeemer. To apply for the position please submit a letter of introduction, CV and OTM profile as pdf documents to searchcommittee@ourreedemerlexington.org.
Deadline to apply is April 30, 2023.

Address

6 Meriam St, Lexington, MA 02402

Telephone

+781-862-6408

Website

www.our-redeemer.net