



July 2020



## Excuses Not to Go and Excuses Not to Support Are still Excuses

On the third Sunday of June I preached a sermon about the making of excuses. The message was based on the text from the Gospel according to St. Luke 14:15-24. I also provided in my Daily Devotion of Comfort & Assurance on the very next day a brief meditation on the same text. If you're not familiar with the text, I encourage you to read it. Summarized as briefly as possible, the event goes as follows: Jesus was invited to the home of a prominent ruler of the Pharisees. One of the lessons Jesus taught was about a man who gave a great banquet. He invited many. Unfortunately, many made excuses not to come. So when the servant reported these things to the master he became angry. The master summoned the servants to go out into the streets of the city and bring in the poor, crippled, blind and lame. After doing that, there was still room in the master's banquet hall. The master said, "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled." And the master concluded saying, "For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

In this parable Jesus tells us about a great banquet and several groups of people who make excuses not to attend. Now, let me be very clear; the excuses given by these people are petty and nonsensical. And so, this parable isn't necessarily dealing with legitimate reasons but petty excuses, petty excuses like the ones we use for not attending church services or for not contributing to the support of the church. To be sure, the Church will survive and thrive with or without you and me. However, your local congregation – Redeemer Lutheran Church – is another matter. It will survive and thrive only if you and I actually attend services and support the ministry of the church with our weekly contributions.

You see, pastors often hear about every excuse in the book from individuals and families for not attending church or for not contributing. There are a lot of excuses, don't deny it! But why make excuses not to go to church services or not contribute to her needs?

Perhaps, we try to think up clever excuses to justify our actions of skipping church or not contributing, in order that we don't feel so bad and guilty. But that still doesn't get to the heart of the problem. And that problem is much more profound.

If you and I take a moment and think about Jesus' parable a bit more carefully, something is not right about it. Perhaps if we think about it this way; the man who prepared the great banquet wasn't inviting a bunch of people over for a social distancing beach party with a bowl loaded with stale nachos. He wasn't inviting people over for one of those free meals that you have to eat followed by a high-pressure sales pitch about investing in an Amway pyramid program. The man who prepared the banquet wasn't some lonely bachelor needing social interaction after a long spell of isolation and had the idea to throw a party to get himself out of an emotional

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## Excuses (CONTINUED)

slump. No, this man invited people to a great banquet, which is why needing an excuse not to attend doesn't make any sense.

Now, when I say a great banquet, I'm not merely talking about a large Thanksgiving Dinner. The Thanksgiving Dinners that many people have each year are child's play compared to the great banquet feast this man prepared. You see, if you were to attend a banquet – like the one mentioned in Jesus' parable – the first thing you would be given would be a brilliant white robe to be worn as a symbol of honor, along with a crown of flowers on your head. Secondly, you would be led to recline on a couch near a lowered table, where you would be given the most exceptional wine to drink, along with beautiful smelling perfume to wear. And then, while you waited for the food to be served, entertainers would sing, play music, and perhaps dance. And then for the food! Imagine the best food you have ever tasted (probably something wrapped with bacon), prepared totally for your enjoyment. And what about after the meal? Well, you don't have to think about clearing the tables or cleaning the dishes. The servants do all that for you while washing your hands with water and wiping them with a cloth.

Enough of that, let's get back to our consideration of Jesus's parable. As already mentioned, several of these individuals had lame excuses to get out of the banquet. But why? The answer, they were acting as if the banquet was some sort of curse that they had to avoid. The invitation was an irritation to their ears. It could be compared to a teenage girl who says to an obnoxious but persistent boy, "I can't go on a date with you because I am washing my hair." The excuses of the individuals show us that they believed that the banquet invitation was some sort of inconvenience rather than a great gift.

Dear friends, I'm convinced that the reason why so many people avoid going to and supporting the ministry of the church and think up silly excuses is that they don't see what is truly happening during the Divine Service. They perceive church services and the monetary contribution to

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## SERVING THE LORD

Pastor Rev. James Kress

Child Care Director Wendy Horvath

Office Admin Asst Caitlin Tilton

Organist Bill Bowers

Choir Director Collins Sita

Newsletter Editor Pat Finkenbine

### OFFICERS

President Wade Duncan

Vice President Bill Bowers

Treasurer

Secretary Caitlin Tilton

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Head Elder Mike Nagel

Christian Ed.

Human Care Lisa Kress

Outreach

Assimilation Anne Varone

School Board

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Youth Alan Duburg

Financial Secretary Mindy Duncan

Property Mgmt. Bob Varone

### GROUPS/GUILDS

Ladies Guild Sally Zierdt

Men's Group

Altar Guild

Coffee Hour

## Excuses (CONTINUED)

the church to be a curse, an inconvenience and irritation, instead of what it actually is: a great gift.

However, let me tell you a little dark secret and divulge some insight. Many individuals in America are entirely justified in wanting to avoid going and supporting the church. The reason why? Many churches in America do not function like a great banquet, where the Lord's gifts are freely and joyously given.

Please permit me an opportunity to explain.

Imagine working five days out of the week to serve customers and to serve your boss. Then Saturday rolls around, and you have to serve the needs of your family through mowing the lawn, cleaning the house, doing the laundry, and catching up on projects. And then suddenly the alarm goes off on Sunday morning. You get up, put on your finest clothes, and drive to church to give your best to God.

At the beginning of the church service, the worship leader comes out and asks you to stand and make a joyful noise to the Lord. After a couple of songs, even though your coffee hasn't kicked in yet, the worship leader is crying out, "Now this time, really sing it! Everyone get your hands up!" Then, just when you think you can take a break, the pastor comes out, and you are given a list of ways in which you can be a better Christian and better serve God through a bunch of different missions and ministries in the church.

After church is finally complete; you finish some errands, go home, and go to bed, only to start it all over again on Monday.

Lord, have mercy upon us all!

Church services like this – and they do exist in every town in America – are not about handing out the gifts of God, but instead, they take from parishioners. In these churches, it is expected that you come to church on Sundays to give your best to God through fervent prayers and vibrant singing. And in case you haven't given enough, the pastor gives you tips and pointers of how you can live your best life for God. Tragically, instead of parishioners being a guest at a great banquet in the church service, they are tossed into the kitchen and expected to huff and puff in serving God. These churches expect their parishioners to come to church to be kitchen maids, hall boys, and cooks for the Lord – as if the Lord needs to be served by mankind. Sigh!

Again, Lord, have mercy upon us all!

Listen to what Christ says. Yes, listen: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."

Dear Baptized saints chosen by God, what this means is this: if the church services of Redeemer fail to be great banquets that deliver God's gifts to you, then this church is indeed a curse and should be avoided. The doors should be shut and the building bulldozed to the ground. However, when churches are and remain faithful – when they are great banquets of the Lord's forgiveness, life, and salvation – do not treat church services like they are curses, but for what they are: great gifts from God.

Please keep in mind that the church services here at Redeemer follow a liturgy. That liturgy, although printed in bulletins, comes straight out of our hymnals. And in our hymnals, they are called Divine Services. They are called this because the "Divine One" – the Lord – serves you! In other words, every service here in Redeemer is like a great banquet where

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Excuses (CONTINUED)

Christ is the one who intends to serve you, and you get to receive from Him.

Is this not great news or what! When you attend a Divine Service here at Redeemer, you don't clothe the Lord in an honorable robe, but the Lord clothes you in brilliant righteousness through baptism – covering your sin and guilt. When you come through the sanctuary doors, you are not some kitchen maid or hall boy who prepares a banquet for the Lord from a tiny dirty kitchen, but the Lord prepares a table for you and gives you His true body and blood. And the pastor, as he stands in the pulpit, is not like a head cook that barks out kitchen orders to you, but instead, the one who proclaims the Good News of forgiveness, life, and salvation into your ears.

Dearly Redeemed in Christ, in the Lord's Divine Services He gives to you Himself. He gives you everything – nothing held back – grace upon grace for you to receive. It is as He says, "a great banquet!"

And so, excuses do not make sense when you understand that church services are great banquets. Furthermore, evangelism and outreach make sense when church services are great banquets with plenty of food and seats for everyone to receive. Evangelism and outreach are simply going out everywhere to everyone and saying, "Come, everything is ready now for you!"

And when you find yourselves not wanting to come to the great banquet of the Divine Service? Well, that is just your old Adam that throws misery over joy. It is only your old Adam that hates the blessing of the Lord's great banquet. It is just your old Adam that is a stubborn killjoy that needs to be put to death at the doors of the great banquet hall. Your old nature is foolish and deserves a kick or a muzzle, as you arise to feast at the Lord's great banquet.

And so, my dear Baptized Saints, rejoice! You are blessed when you receive from Christ, when He serves you. You are blessed – not cursed – when you come to Redeemer's renovated sanctuary, not to give God your best, but to receive God's best in Christ for you. Hearing the wonderful works of God done in Christ Jesus for you, motivates you to joyfully enter the sanctuary and make an offering that would be pleasing in His sight.

Your Repentant Excuse-Making Servant in Christ,  
Pastor Jim Kress



Church: [www.redeemerfl.com](http://www.redeemerfl.com)  
Child Care: [www.redeemerfl-cc.com](http://www.redeemerfl-cc.com)  
School: [www.redeemerfl-school.com](http://www.redeemerfl-school.com)

facebook

Redeemer Lutheran Church of Englewood  
Redeemer Lutheran Child Care

***The deadline for the August Newsletter is July 18th  
Please have all your submissions sent to [patchas123@gmail.com](mailto:patchas123@gmail.com)  
OR drop them off at the church office by the date indicated above. Thank You!***



# Lutheran Church Extension Fund

> where investments build ministry

## LCEF Difference

LCEF has served as the financial extension of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) since 1978, offering funding and resources in support of the Church. When you invest with LCEF, you are providing for the creation and growth of congregations and ministries across the country.

## Investing in a strong LCMS community

LCEF empowers LCMS ministries with every dollar invested. And with nearly 60,000 investors, we have been able to make a difference for thousands of ministries. We provide customized loans and support services to new and growing ministries as well as loans for Rostered Church Workers who dedicate their lives to sharing the Gospel.

## Securing your financial future

Our generous investors and dedicated loan customers have made it possible for us to maintain a strong capital position. We offer competitive rates and ensure your invested funds remain accessible and in your control. With LCEF, you experience the benefits of working with an established financial institution while growing the LCMS.

## Supporting you around the clock

LCEF offers secure, 24/7 online access to investments and loans through MyAccount. View balances and statements, complete transactions and even receive alerts when payments are due. Communicate directly with dedicated LCEF staff members who share your faith and values to ensure your stewardship efforts are always well-informed and free of stress.

## Mission Statement

The mission of Lutheran Church Extension Fund is to support The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by ensuring that financial resources and related services are available now and in the future.

Please consider opening an account with LCEF today. For more information, visit [LCEF.org](https://www.lcef.org).

Yours in Christ,  
Rob Tilton  
LCEF Congregational Advocate



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## Treasurer's Report

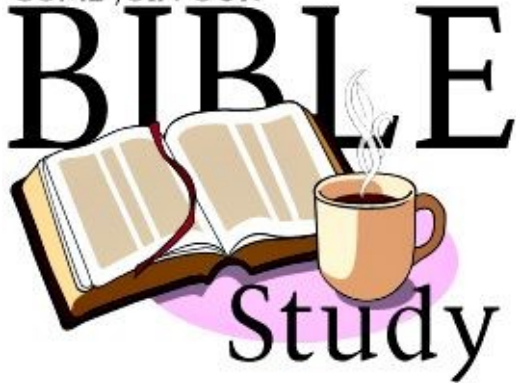
*As of May 31, 2020*

	<u>ACTUAL</u>	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>OVER/UNDER</u>
INCOME	16,180	14,641	1,539
<u>EXPENSES</u>	<u>16,818</u>	<u>17,663</u>	(845)
<b>+/-</b>	(638)	(3,022)	
 <b>YEAR TO DATE</b>			
INCOME	108,366	73,116	35,250
<u>EXPENSES</u>	<u>94,286</u>	<u>88,312</u>	5,974
<b>+/-</b>	14,080	(15,196)	



Respectfully submitted,  
*Jean Clappe-Mixell*  
 North Star Bookkeeping LLC

COME JOIN OUR



**Wednesday Morning Table Talk:** Join us in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m., to gather with Pastor Kress around tables to talk theology, ask a wide range of interesting questions, and witness our own theology shaped by the Word of God. No one is required to know everything about anything. If you have questions or are interested in listening in on our Table Talk, you are welcome to join us in some engaging and thought-provoking conversations.

### PROPERTY APPRECIATION DAY

We sure could use some help on our Property Appreciation Days every month. There is outside work to do and cleaning and dusting that needs done inside the Church. If you can help, please come to the church and we will put you to work. **Our next Property Appreciation Day is Saturday, July 18th at 8:00 am.**





"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" asked the rich young ruler.

Jesus said, "You know the commandments." And the ruler replied, "All these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (Luke 18:18–22)

As we listen to this, one question is raised in our minds: Is Jesus speaking to us also or only to the rich young ruler? In other words, is Jesus telling us to sell all that we have and give it to the poor? As good Lutherans, we answer: No! But why? Why should we not sell all that we have and distribute it to the poor?

The simplest explanation is this: If we sold everything we have, our wife and our children would be neglected. In other words, to sell everything we have and give it to the poor would ignore, even abandon, those whom God has placed in our care. Our money, everything we have, is not to be used solely for the church. But that doesn't mean it isn't to be used for the purpose God intends.

Everyone has three stations in life, three spheres in which we live and are to be of service to our neighbors. These stations are the church, the family, and society. We are members of all three of these by birth.

- We are born into the church by water and the Word of God, and our duties to others in the church arise from either our birth into the church or the birth of others by Baptism into it.
- We are born into a family, and our duties to others stem from either our birth into that family or the birth of others into our family.

Finally, we are born into society, which is simply a further extension of our birth into our family. The duties we have toward other members of society come from either our birth or the birth of others into the same society.

All that we have and all that we are is to be pressed into service for the church, the family, and society. If we were to sell all we have and give only to one, the other two would be neglected, and our duties toward them would falter.

So consider your life and all that you have in light of these three stations. You pay taxes to support and help those in society. You provide food, clothing, and shelter for the members of your family. You save for college for your children.

But the one station that is usually thought of last is the church. Since the needs of the family and society are more immediate, the church is often given what is left over. This is not how it should be. Rather, we are to give of our first fruits – the best from off the top – even as Abel gave the best of his flock.

This requires forethought and intent. It means that you sit down and make a plan for what you will give from the beginning. It means sticking to it even when it seems there are other more immediate and pressing things.

This is all the more necessary now as we enter into periods of time while giving is low due to high unemployment or restrictions on meeting in church to give. If we love God, his gifts of forgiveness given through the means of grace we receive at church and only at church, then we will support the church just as we love our country and our family.

For all that we have and all that we are is given to us by our gracious and giving God. He spared no expense for us and our salvation. He gave up His Son into death so that our sins are forgiven, and we will live. What is more, He provides for all that we need for this body and life. And our lives in this world, among these three spheres of the church, the family, and society, are to mirror the generosity of the one who gave us life in all three by birth.

Don't let the church, your divine family, be ignored or even an afterthought. The church is nurturing you, bringing you up in salvation by Word and Sacrament for eternal life.

## PRAYERS



**SHUT-INS:** Judy Clasen, Susan Jahns, Rita Kaufmann, and Donna Weston

**HEALING for Members:** Neva Aldene, Carl Bertka, Jean Cote, Kathryn Demma, Ed & Jan DeTrow, Charlie & Pat Finkenbine, Don Garay, Mike & Judy Guastella, Bud & Jane Harty, Kitty Hill, Mark Horvath, Marva Jonas, Chuck Malecki, Angela Mannato, Ken Mielke, Lillian Miles, Glenn Mossner, Mariana Murray, Bob Payne, Tom & Sue Poyer, Dorothy Sinowetski, Russ & Carol Spooner, Ron Tandy, Caitlin Tilton, Bob Varone, Robert Vickey, and Sally Zierdt.

**FRIENDS & RELATIVES:** Michelle Bernard, Grace Blum, Bill Bowers, Jr., Mary Brissette, Dennis Burchell, Georgia Bush, Diane Carr, Pat Carroll, Sally Chambers, Esther Clapham, Bobbett Clark, Donna Connors, Lisa Copeman, Martin Cressman, Molly Criely, Renee Dempsey, Irene DiTommaso, Barb Dumeah, Bruce Everson, Donna Fancher, Darla Finkenbine, Gerald and Mary Fischer, Marla Flores, Joe Fountain, Manual Galan, Liam Garland, Barbara George, Sandra Gettings, Vinnie Giannola, Nancy Gleis,

Mary Ann Guilfoyle, Shelley Roedel Gutz, Mikayla Hacksunda & her baby girl, Lily, Marlene Hagen, Jake Harper, Debbie Harrison, Dennis Hegarty, Claudette Hendershot, Glory Herget, John Hill, friends & family of Rick Hill, Robin Hincman, Roger Hinzmann, David Hirtle, Larry Hladun, Linda Holt, Gretchen Hull & her unborn child, John Hunter, Linda Hunter, Chelsea Hutchinson, Stanley and Lynne Jablonski, Larry Jackson, Bill Jaquest, Heather Johnson, Rachel Kagay, Daniel & Michelle Kalstrup, John Kearns, Parker Kern, Elizabeth Lynn Klopfenstein, Nancy Lake, Stacey Lampert, Ray Likowski, Janet Lixey, Joe Manson, Candace McGowan, Dave McMullen, Pete Mogg, Mike Morrissey, Ron Mullins, Esther Murphy, Louis Nanni, Bill & Jean Nesbitt, Riley Emilia Paquette, Charles Pentecost Jr., Robin Potts, Rob Powers, John Purdy, Mary Raines, Elaine Reebe, Paul Rollo, Sandra Scheel, Ed Sheahan, Nancy Sly, Don Stewart, Charles Tolley, Gwyneth Tolman, George Vespa, Jim & Judy Wahl, Steven Walker, Christy Wallace, Helen Weishaar, Gene & Donna Wensel, Gordan Winkel, family & friends of Mary Agnes Wright, Wava Zeitlow, and Martha Zimpfer.

**Military Personnel:** Mark Baranowsky, Michael Broughton, Joseph Garay, Thomas Francis Stynes II, Brian Jackson, Jonathan Koen, and Charles D. Weishaar

**Pastor and members of the church are always willing to pray for you, family members and friends. If a loved one appears on our prayer list above, please call Pastor or the church office to give us a health update so that we may either keep or remove their name. Thank you!**



## UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN

This is a story we have told to many, but we love explaining how we came to be members of Redeemer Lutheran Church. In 2012, on a visit to see family in Englewood, we decided to become snowbirds and purchased a home in Tangerine Woods. We closed in March via email and drove down in May to set the house up for the summer. One of the first things we do whenever we are visiting somewhere for more than a couple of weeks, is to find a church. When we searched the internet, we found that we were located between two LCMS churches: Lakeside Lutheran, six and a half miles to the north and Redeemer Lutheran, six and a half miles to the south.

The first Sunday we attended Redeemer, where we were greeted and welcomed by almost everyone. We very much enjoyed the sermon and Pastor Kress was gracious to us as we were leaving, asking our names and inquiring as to the reason for our visit. The following Sunday we visited Lakeside Lutheran Church, where clusters of congregants talked among themselves and ignored us. The Pastor was gracious as we left and shook our hands but quickly moved on to the people behind us. When we came down at the end of September for the winter months, we decided to again sample both churches. When we walked into Redeemer, we were again greeted warmly and Pastor Kress came up to us to welcome us back and called us by name! We decided right then we didn't need to look any further for our Florida church. On Tuesday, Pastor Kress called to make an appointment to come see us. He visited for over three hours while we got to know him and he got to know us. By the time he left, he had signed us up as Associate Members and had us on the committee for the pictorial directory. Over the almost eight years that we have been with Redeemer, Pastor Kress and his wife, Lisa, have gotten us involved in the church newsletter, creating and managing websites for the church, childcare and school, playing Santa Claus and other volunteer projects. It is difficult to say no to Pastor. We have enjoyed the services, the bible studies, and the Advent and Lenten dinners (thank you Neva and crew!). And we have enjoyed the friendship of many good, Christian people. How blessed we are to have found Redeemer.

Unfortunately, it is time for us to leave Florida. Charlie turned 95 this past February and we both have trouble getting around. The trip back and forth is too much for us. Our doctors are here in Ohio. Our family is here. We are not good at good-byes. Because of COVID-19, we've not seen many of you for months, and truthfully, that makes it easier. Saying goodbye to Pastor Kress when he came to the house was too hard.



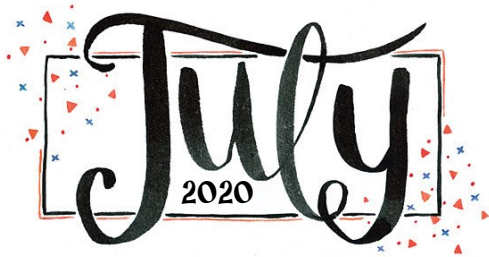
We don't know if we will ever be back in Florida. But we do know we will see you again someday. So we are not going to say goodbye. Just ... until we meet again. You will remain in our hearts forever. God bless you and stay safe!

*Pat & Charlie Finkenbine*



REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH,  
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6970 Mineola Rd.  
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6970 Mineola Rd.  
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**REV. JAMES T. KRESS, SR.**  
*Pastor*

**Church/School Phone:**  
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Email: redeemerfl@gmail.com

**Child Care Phone: 941-475-2631**

Email: redeemerchildcare@gmail.com

### REDEEMER REPORTER

Published monthly for members, associate members and visitors of Redeemer Lutheran Church. Redeemer is a member congregation of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. (LCMS).

### WORSHIP SERVICES:

Divine Service: 9:15 and 11:00 am

Bible Class: *temporarily postponed*

Sunday School: *temporarily postponed*

*The Redeemer Lutheran Church, School & Child Care Family are called into the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by His command (Matthew 28:18-20) to:*

*♦Disciple all nations, that is, all people;*

*♦Baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;*

*♦Proclaim the Gospel and teach His Word in its truth and purity; and*

*♦Never be ashamed of the Gospel—it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).*