



# Voice of The Redeemer

Season of Late Pentecost  
Fall 2006

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*The Life and Ministry of the People of the Church of the Redeemer*

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## What Hope for ECUSA?

What lies ahead for the Episcopal Church, USA? Our denomination continues to be embroiled in controversy, but of course the Anglican and Episcopal Churches were born in controversy—political, social and theological. Though today's issues are different, decision-making at the national level of our Church continues to spark heated opinion and ignite opposition within the larger body of the Anglican Communion. In fact, this opposition threatens our inherited identity as a national church and our role as a fully-recognized member of the Anglican Communion. What has brought about our perilous position and what outcomes may lie ahead?

*historians may regard our period as a time of significant reform*

Centuries from now Church historians may regard our period as a time of significant reform for Christianity. Once again, Christians are experiencing tensions between centralized authority and local religious expressions. Early on, the centrally-organized Church of Rome exercised authority over a Christian movement initially characterized by diverse centers of religious expression and leadership. Our time may come to be seen as a period of reform similar to the Protestant Reformation which rejected the religious and political hegemony of Rome and claimed the freedom to create churches that more closely reflected the beliefs and cultures of emerging nation states. Future historians may regard this as a time when the powers of globalization require denominations such as ours to realign themselves spiritually and structurally on the basis of a shared interpretation of the Gospel.

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## Barbara Abbott's Malawi Experience

My travel in Malawi was a rich and intense experience, deepening my belief that people of faith are called to compassion above all else. I also learned how complex the repercussions of an epidemic like AIDS can be in a culture completely different from our own. I came away with great respect for a people struggling to build a future against tremendous odds and committed to our efforts at the Redeemer to support Malawian children affected by HIV/AIDS and their caregivers.



Over two weeks in Malawi I saw several of the projects we help support – a primary and a nursery school, a feeding program for orphans and a community-based program for “street children.” In each of these settings I was greeted as a friend, benefiting from the relationships previous Redeemer travelers have worked to sustain. We are not an anonymous benefactor. Malawians are so grateful and very curious to know more about us. I preached in two village churches. When I asked the parishioners if they had questions for me, a hand shot up and a man pressed the question on so many minds: “But, you are a woman, how can you also be a priest?”

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**Regular Sunday  
schedule returns  
September 17  
Worship at 7:45, 9 & 11:15  
Church School and  
Adult Forum follows  
the 9 am service.**



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In addition to existing projects, I met and interviewed some of the 40 nursing students GAIA supports with scholarships (Redeemer has made study possible for four of these young women). This new initiative, designed to provide badly needed care-givers in a country losing many of its educated to more lucrative foreign jobs, requires that the nurses give a minimum of four years service in country upon graduation. These first-year students were about to take exams to complete their second term of study. They are lovely young women who use their “pocket money”—a small allowance for personal needs—to send home to brothers and sisters for school fees. They acknowledge that the opportunity to study nursing would never have been afforded them without our help.

Another wonderful experience in Malawi was my visit to Open Arms Orphanage in Blantyre, a major city. Our campus ministry student, Jess Browning (a rising sophomore at Bryn Mawr College) was six weeks into her two months of residency there as a volunteer. When I stepped inside the orphanage, there was Jess surrounded by babies! She has helped to care for all of the 42 children here—bathing, dressing and feeding and playing early development games with the toddlers—and building relationships with the Malawian women who work at the orphanage. Jess could describe the condition of each baby upon his or her arrival at the orphanage and taught me to recognize the signs of malnutrition. I began to appreciate the active playfulness of the center’s nutritionally rehabilitated and loved children. When a child is well enough to be returned to a guardian or family member in its’ village, that child is returned—sometimes to a grandparent who may already be caring for a large number of orphans. Follow-up is critical to these children’s well-being. Secondary school education is provided at a cost which all too many families find unaffordable.

My experience in Malawi was different from previous Redeemer travelers in that I joined a group of doctors, one lawyer, a businessman, a seminary development officer and three students, most of whom are from All Saints Episcopal in Pasadena, California. As a group, we shared a wish to learn and find how God is calling each of us to respond to the needs of Malawians. The docs were building a plan to provide a rotation of American doctors who wish to volunteer their time and skills in Malawi. The students were discerning how they were being called to different vocations. We had all brought donated medical supplies and learned where which supplies were most needed and why. My two large suitcases of your donated medical supplies went to small hospitals with bare pharmacy shelves.

We visited six different medical facilities with the docs rolling up their sleeves in several to perform surgery, deliver babies and diagnose illnesses. I went on pastoral rounds with an Anglican chaplain in a very poor hospital, praying with patients through an interpreter. Each evening at dinner our group was joined by Malawian leaders—the Minister of Health, an Anglican Bishop, Dean of the country’s newly minted medical college, GAIA project directors, to name a few. We plied them with questions and listened with great attention to their stories.

Still there were site visits that left us speechless. Government-run “Bottom Hospital” in Lilongwe was the “black” hospital under colonialism, named for its geographical situation. It is one of the poorest hospitals in the world—and one of the busiest with 12,000 babies delivered a year. There are constant shortages of drugs and supplies, no blood to transfuse, to say nothing of surgeons or neo-natal care. Malawi’s maternal death rate is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest in the world—1800 mothers die out of every 100,000 live births. We left with heavy hearts.

We also volunteered time in schools and orphanages. At Chididi, where our Redeemer team spent three days engaging the children in learning games and reading last year, we also led classes and met with teachers and local parent council. This is one of many schools desperate for reading materials as the government has not supplied the schools with books as promised these past three years. The books purchased by our parish were gratefully received here.

Each evening the group met after dinner to process our feelings from the day and join in evening prayer. Some of us began to write our own prayers and offer them as well as



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to pray for the people we had met that day. There were tears and laughter, silence and anger—a lot of raw, unprocessed thoughts and emotions. I'm still in that framework of grief, sadness, anger, longing and hope. I believe God is the mysterious presence we encounter when we feel abandoned to confusion and flooded with feelings. God surely was present to me in the unexpected moments when I thought I had a grip on the learning, only to uncover something more that made me step back and seek a larger frame for understanding.

I am so grateful to the Church of the Redeemer for the opportunity to travel to Malawi and help in any way I can to support the work of the African Children's Mission. In October, I hope to offer my photos and stories in an Adult Forum. I look forward to this community's reflection and response.

*Barbara Abbott*

The African Children's Mission has produced beautiful note cards. Photos taken by our travel teams to Malawi are now available on the front of lovely note cards. They are available in the Parish Office. Each card sells for \$4 and all proceeds go to support the African Children's Mission ministry and its support of HIV/AIDS services.

## Parents Party

For many years now there has been a wonderful gathering of parents in the early fall. The Saturday night before the first day of church school, the parents of children and youth (from infants through high school) have come together to celebrate the beginning of a new Church School year. This year is no different. The party will take place on Saturday, September 16, at the home of Carter and Ginny Williams, 460 Highview Drive, Radnor, from 5-7 pm. Hosts this year also include Beth Corrigan & Karl Beinkampen and Debbie & Stephen Lee. Join us to celebrate, meet new friends and greet old ones. We all hope that you plan to be with us that evening. Child care during the party will be provided in the Church Nursery (second floor of the Parish House). When you RSVP to Tish in the church office 610-525-2486, Ext. 10, please let her know whether you plan to use child care, the number of children and their ages.

*Ginny and Carter Williams*

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## CAFÉ CONVERSATIONS: PRACTICING OUR FAITH

*A Way of Life for Searching People*



Sundays Sept. 24, and Oct. 1, 8 and 15, 2006

10:15– 11 am in the Parish House

We had such a great time at our last Café Conversations series that we're doing it again! This time our topic is "Practicing Our Faith"—exploring traditions of Christian living. Over cappuccino and refreshments, we'll reflect on Christian practices that could bring new life to our families, the community and our daily routines:

**September 24: Forgiving and Being Forgiven**

*What's involved in forgiving others and what's involved in accepting forgiveness? How does reconciliation become part of my life?*

**October 1: Practicing our Faith as Episcopalians**

*What questions do I have about the Episcopal Church in general and Redeemer in particular? Our rector, Peter Sipple, will facilitate.*

**October 8: Saying "Yes" and Saying "No"**

*What is most necessary in our lives? What guides my choices?*

**October 15: Balancing Spending, Saving and Giving**

*Household economics: What is essential for the well-being of my household?*

Please join us!