

50th Anniversary Celebration - Then and Now - May 4, 2013

Opening Prayer

We give thanks to you, O God, for all your servants and witnesses of time past: Abraham and Sara; Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; Joshua, Deborah, and Gideon; Hannah and Samuel; Isaiah and all the prophets; Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary of Bethany, Martha, and Mary Magdalene; Peter, Paul, and Stephen and all the martyrs in every time and place; and especially now for your saints here at our Redeemer Lutheran Church. In your mercy, give us, as you gave others, the desire to do your will, and the ability to carry it out, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

1963. It was a year of momentous events that have echoed down through the decades:

On January 2, in Vietnam, the Viet Cong won their first major victory in a war that would drag on until the final Viet Cong victory in 1975. The emotional scars of that war linger on in both Vietnam and the United States.

On January 22, France and Germany signed the friendship treaty that definitively put their old enmity behind them and laid the groundwork for long-term peace in Europe. This year both countries marked the 50th anniversary of this groundbreaking treaty with special celebrations.

On February 8, U.S. President John F. Kennedy began the embargo against Cuba that is still in force today.

On February 11, the Beatles recorded their debut album, "Please, Please Me." Little did anyone know what a global and lasting phenomenon they would become.

The Marvel Comics character Iron Man debuted in March, a character which more recently has featured in major motion pictures.

On March 5, country singer Patsy Cline was killed when her plane crashed. Many who remember her, and many who weren't even born yet, still mourn her death.

The Soap Opera "General Hospital" debuted on April 1. "General Hospital" is still in production and holds the Guinness World Record for longest running American TV drama still in production, and the third longest running American TV of all time after "Guiding

Light" and "As the World Turns." The longest running TV drama in the world that is still in production is (can you guess?): the British series "The Archers", followed by "Coronation Street."

On April 20, night watchman Wilfred O'Neill was killed when members of the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) bombed a Canadian Army recruitment centre near Montréal. The Québec sovereignty movement is still a factor today.

On April 22 Lester B. Pearson became the 14th Prime Minister of Canada. He went on to introduce the Canada Health Act, the Maple Leaf flag, and UN peace keeping.

On June 15 the first National Hockey League draft was held in Montréal - a momentous occasion in the evolution of Canada's national obsession.

On June 6, Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman in space aboard the Soviet Vostok 6. Today the Russian space program has become the backbone of the world's ability to move people -- men and women -- to and from the International Space Station.

On June 21, Pope Paul VI succeeded his late predecessor Pope John XXIII. He followed through with the Second Vatican Council begun by his predecessor, meant to modernize the Roman Catholic Church. Many Vatican II worship reforms have informed our own Lutheran worship since then.

On June 26 U.S. President John F. Kennedy delivered his "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech in West Berlin, pledging U.S. support to the people of West Berlin after construction of the Berlin Wall had cut the city off from the rest of the world. His gesture still resonates with Germans today.

On August 28, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I have a dream" speech in Washington, D.C. -- a speech that still inspires people today -- and not just in the United States -- to work for a society where all are respected and all have equal access to education and employment.

On October 10 the second James Bond film debuted: "From Russia With Love." The first, "Dr. No," had come out the year before. Bond goes on!

On October 30, Italian automaker Lamborghini was founded -- in case you were wondering.

On November 18, AT&T made the first push button phones available to their customers in the United States.

On November 22, U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, TX. The details of his assassination still puzzle and fascinate many today. His death halted a shift in U.S. foreign policy that Kennedy was getting ready to undertake that might have kept the U.S out of Vietnam -- we can only speculate.

On December 7, CBS TV director Tony Verna aired his amazing new invention: instant replay.

At an unspecified date in 1963, Harvey Ball created the now ubiquitous yellow smiley face. Who knew that it has been around that long already?

Oh yeah, and on May 5, 1963, a group of people gathered here in this church to formally organize Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Penticton. Presiding over the ceremony were Dr. Karl Holfeld and Rev. Curtis Sater. Rev. Al Miller, who had been serving as mission developer in Penticton since July was also formally called and installed as Pastor of the new congregation at that service. And as you know, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church continues to be an important part of the spiritual life of this city and region.

One of the rules of thumb I try to use when assessing how important something is, is to ask myself, "Ten years from now, will it still matter?" You could extend that out to ask, "In 50 years, will it still matter whether we did this or not?"

I think as we look back on the people who gathered here to form this congregation, we can rightly say, "Yes! It did matter and it does matter that they made the choice they did." This congregation is such an important part of so many people's lives. It is a place of friendship, support, inspiration, and learning. The facility that the people of Our Redeemer have built over the decades has become a real resource to the community. Had those people, the charter members, not made the effort, not had the vision, none of that would be true today. It mattered. They made a difference.

But it also matters that people continued to become part of Our Redeemer; that people continued to do the work, give of their time, talent, and treasure, make the effort so that Our Redeemer could continue to thrive and be that important focal point. For all those people we have to give thanks -- for all of you, I give thanks.

And remembering that all that we have --

our abilities, our capacity to work, and all of the resources, both human and material
on which we build our work
-- comes from God,
the creator of all that is,
most importantly let us give thanks to God. Amen.

Closing Prayer

God of grace and wisdom, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Gove us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that you hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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