

# FELLOWSHIP

## EDITORS' NOTE

As we went into production for this issue, both of our scheduled profilers (Parishioner Profile and Newcomer Profile) requested an extension. What were we to do? It was too late to set-up new ones so we looked and found representatives right under our noses—literally. We went to the dogs! We hope you enjoy. *Trish and Ken*

## PARISHIONER PROFILE

As told by **Clementine Vanderveen to Trish Bennett.**

**Tell us a bit about yourself outside of The Redeemer—your family, your hobbies.**

Trish and Peter are my Mum and Dad. Their daughters, Roysin and Alexis, are married now, but we had fun together when they lived with us, and now I have Roysin's little kids, Theo and Louisa, to play with. Three cats live at the rectory too, but I'd rather not discuss that.

**How long have you been a member at The Redeemer?**

I've been at The Redeemer since August of 2009. I'm not really a "member," but I do come to church every day but Sunday. Dad's a little preoccupied on Sundays. He leaves about 6 or 6:30 in the morning and I'd rather sleep in. Come to think of it, I'd rather sleep than anything, except maybe chase squirrels in the church yard. And be with people. And eat.

**What activities are you currently involved with in the parish?**

I've always gone to his office with Dad. I like to greet people, and folks think



*Clemmie on her "pouffe" in the Rector's office awaiting your visit.*

I'm friendly, which I am, especially with little kids. I hope this Spring I can qualify as a therapy dog, helping in hospitals. Ken Garner always has treats in his office, and church gets me away from the cats.

Mostly, though, I love it when folks come to see Dad and talk. If they're sad or worried, I nuzzle up to them and try to make them feel better, and lots of times, they do.

**What does Church of the Redeemer mean to you?**

Dogs have sharp ears. I hear nothing but kind words spoken fondly here. Dogs have keen noses. I sense this is a place where people feel welcomed and treasured for who they are. Dogs keep watch. They are faithful. At The Redeemer I see watchful people keeping and nurturing their faith. I hear and smell and see God's love at work here.

## NEWCOMER PROFILE



*Molly and her friend Peter. He wears a collar too.*

As told by **Molly Mikrut-Garner to Ken Garner.**

**How long have you been attending services here?**

Well, I've been around The Redeemer since late June 2012. I suppose the only "service" I attended was the Blessing of the Animals in October. My Uncle Wilson (who sings in the choir here) held my leash while Ken was busy taking photos.

**Are you a life-long Episcopalian? If not, have you had religious affiliations before becoming involved at The Redeemer?**

Well, I'm not sure. My first dad died suddenly at the age of 50 and I don't remember being around church much. I lived out in horse country outside Malvern so I communed a lot with nature.

**How did you find The Redeemer?** When my dad died, I was boarded at What a Good Dog in Malvern for nearly a month. I was very sad and I longed for my dad and someone to love. Bob Mikrut and Ken Garner had lost their 14 year-old golden, Katie, in March and were still grieving their loss. I believe through the work of the Holy Spirit, one of WAGD's clients, a friend of Bob &

Ken's, told them about me. They came to visit me to see if I might be a match for their home. I was a sight—30 pounds overweight and shaved. (Sorta looked like a Sumo wrestler.) However, they saw through the exterior and sensed my sweet personality and took me home. Now I'm a gorgeous, svelte, flowing coated field-red golden, if I do say so myself.

**What attracted you to attend?**

Well, a cleaning lady every other week in our house usually brings me to the office. I LOVE coming where everyone is so nice, and I enjoy greeting people as they come into our offices. There are LOTS of biscuits, and the rector's dog, Clemmie, has become one of my best friends. We romp and chase squirrels together in the churchyard. FUN!

**Tell us a bit about yourself outside of The Redeemer—your job, your family, your hobbies.**

My job is to make people happy! I told you about Bob and Ken adopting me in my time of need and they, too, are convinced the Holy Spirit played a big part to bring us together to comfort their loss. I was a country girl but quickly adapted to city living. We live in the East Falls neighborhood of Philadelphia. There are many, many things that I love about my new home, not the least of which is that the living room has a couch for each of the two goldens in the house. In addition to Ken Garner (who works in The Redeemer office) and Bob Mikrut (The Redeemer's Verger) I have a "sister" Lucy who is a 10-year-old blonde golden. In the summer, I get to go to Provincetown on Cape Cod and swim in the ocean and romp on the beach. It's my absolute favorite thing about my new life. Oh, did I mention the supply of biscuits?

## REPENTANCE AND CREATION THROUGH THE VOICE OF ANIMALS

BY PETER VANDERVEEN

The practice of giving something up for Lent is meant as a discipline that helps us to focus our attention on things often otherwise forgotten (or to turn around, as in repentance). It has devolved into a much more superficial practice of giving up things we think are bad for us or too enjoyable—but this often just focuses our attention on ourselves in a more concentrated way, which is not the point of the season.

In 1907, Carmen Bernos DeGasztold wrote a beautiful book entitled *Prayers from the Ark*. It's a celebration of the beauty and diversity of the animal world in poems that give voice to the creatures all around us who, otherwise, seem to have no words. As prayers to God, they offer a poignant vision of what we mean when we refer to creation rather than simply to the world or the cosmos. There is something true about the animal world that's important to notice and appreciate, which sets us in relationship to them. This speaking as if in their voice opens dimensions of creation that a truly repentant eye would take delight in.

For instance, DeGasztold's depiction of the fluttering of a butterfly:

'Lord! Where was I? Oh yes! This flower, this sun,  
Thank you! Your world is beautiful!  
This scent of roses... Where was I? A drop of dew  
rolls to sparkle in a lily's heart.  
I have to go...  
Where? I do not know!  
... where was I?'

—which is set in contrast then to the sturdiness of an ox:

"Dear God... Men are always so driven!  
Make them understand that I can never hurry.  
Give me time to eat. Give me time to plod."

But perhaps no prayer is as close to us and moving as that of the dog:

"Lord, I keep watch.  
If I am not here, who will guard their house?...  
No one but you and I understands what faithfulness is...  
I take their pats and the old bones they throw me and I seem pleased...  
I keep watch! Lord, do not let me die until, for them, all danger is driven away."

Saint Augustine noted that sin is the state of being curved in around one's self. And if so, then repentance might well best be found in DeGasztold's prayers from the ark.