



**Redeemer Lutheran Church of Leisure World and
St. Theodore of Canterbury Episcopal Church**
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Message from the Pastor:



Dear members and friends of Redeemer Lutheran and St. Theodore of Canterbury Episcopal Churches,

God's grace and peace be with you. It was suggested my first newsletter article share a few details about my life. I do so with the hope that in the weeks ahead, I will learn more about you, your lives, and your stories.

I was raised on a dairy farm in St. Charles Missouri, near St. Louis. My father's parents and one of his sister's family also lived on that farm, where we milked cows, raised beef and chickens, harvested our own crops and gardens to feed the animals as well as our family. A mile from our farm was the Lutheran Church and school, and also the parsonage where my other grandparents lived. In my youth, I was surrounded by loving Christian family members. Three of my uncles and one cousin were Lutheran pastors along with my grandfather on my mother's side. I attended Lutheran grade school for eight years, public high school for four years, Lutheran college for four years and Lutheran seminary for four years. When my grandfather retired, our next pastor and his family came to our community. His children went to the Lutheran grade school where I was attending. A few years later, that pastor left to become a college professor. Some years later I attended that college and reconnected with his family. I met one of his daughters who had been my childhood schoolmate. We fell in love. Rhoda and I were married 52 years ago after she finished college and while I was in my first year of seminary. She worked as a special Ed teacher, then took some years to be a full-time mother. She returned to elementary education when our children were older, serving in a variety of teaching capacities. She retired in 2015.

I was ordained in 1975 and served three different congregations, all in California. I had also done my one year of internship (vicarage) in 1973-74 in this state. Rhoda and I were delighted to return to serve and live on the West Coast after my final year of seminary. We have three children, all in their 40s, all married to wonderful spouses, and together they have given us 5 delightful grandchildren, one girl and four boys. The oldest is 17 and the youngest is 7 months. To them we are Mimi and Papa. Two of our children's families live in Southern California (Encinitas and Seal Beach) and the other lives in Williamsburg VA.

In 1993, Bishop Robert Miller invited me to join the staff of the Pacific Synod-ELCA as his Assistant to the Bishop. When Bishop Miller retired in 1998 as the first Bishop of the Pacifica Synod, I was elected to be its second Bishop. I served in that capacity for 18 years, retiring in 2016. In my “so-called retirement,” I served Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Fullerton for most of 2019 during their pastoral vacancy. When the Southwest California Synod, our neighboring synod to the north, experienced a vacancy in the Bishop’s office in 2020 and 2021, I was asked by our Presiding Bishop to fill that vacancy until a new Bishop could be elected. For six months in 2022-2023, I provided pastoral ministry at Christ Lutheran Church in Orange after the sudden resignation of their pastor. In September of 2023, I came to Redeemer\St. Theodore to preach for Pastor Gil Moore's 70th anniversary of his ordination. I learned of your pastoral vacancy here. One thing led to another, and now for a season of time, I have agreed to be with the two congregations that worship together here in Leisure World.

It has been a delightful time for both Rhoda and me to be with you. Besides the pastoral ministry I have agreed to do for this season, I am committed to working with the Pacifica Synod and the Los Angeles Episcopal Diocese, their bishops and staff members, to help this worshipping community again have a more permanent pastoral ministry. Besides family and serving in interim capacities as I have, I do volunteer work on behalf of the ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Ministries. I also enjoy woodworking, and I have taken up the hobby of archery again, which I did as a boy on the farm many years ago. Rhoda and I are appreciative of your warm hospitality, open arms and open hearts, and your affirming and caring reception as we have come into your community of faith. We especially thank you for your prayers and care and the beautiful flowers you sent to our home following Rhoda's recent successful surgery. Thank you. God bless and keep you.

The Reverend Murray D. Finck

Bishop Emeritus