

Curacy at Redeemer

Many of you are probably still familiar with the name Hunter Van Wagenen who served at Redeemer from 2016-2020. But did you know that he was Redeemer's first curate? For those not familiar with the term, a curate is an individual, either ordained or pursuing ordination, who assists in a parish's ministry for a designated amount of time as they train and prepare for their calling to future ministry.

At Redeemer, we are committed to next generation leadership, and part of this vision is our curacy program, which provides an opportunity of active training for clergy. We had an incredibly positive experience with Hunter and Stephie Van Wagenen. After they followed their anticipated call to ministry elsewhere, we began the process of solidifying funding for our curacy program and finding our next curate.

About three years ago at Synod, we were connected through our diocese to the Made to Flourish Foundation. This foundation uses the generosity of a family in the Midwest to sustain ongoing curacy programs across the U.S. They began these programs and grants because they saw a need for pastors and ministry leaders to have a "residency" to better

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equip them for healthy and sustainable ministry. While seminary provides the educational piece, this kind of "residency" provides beginning or future clergy hands-on practical application as well as mentors that offer guidance and discernment. Study has shown that there is much early burnout in ministry, and so this program seeks to equip pastors in order to protect them and their work from this.

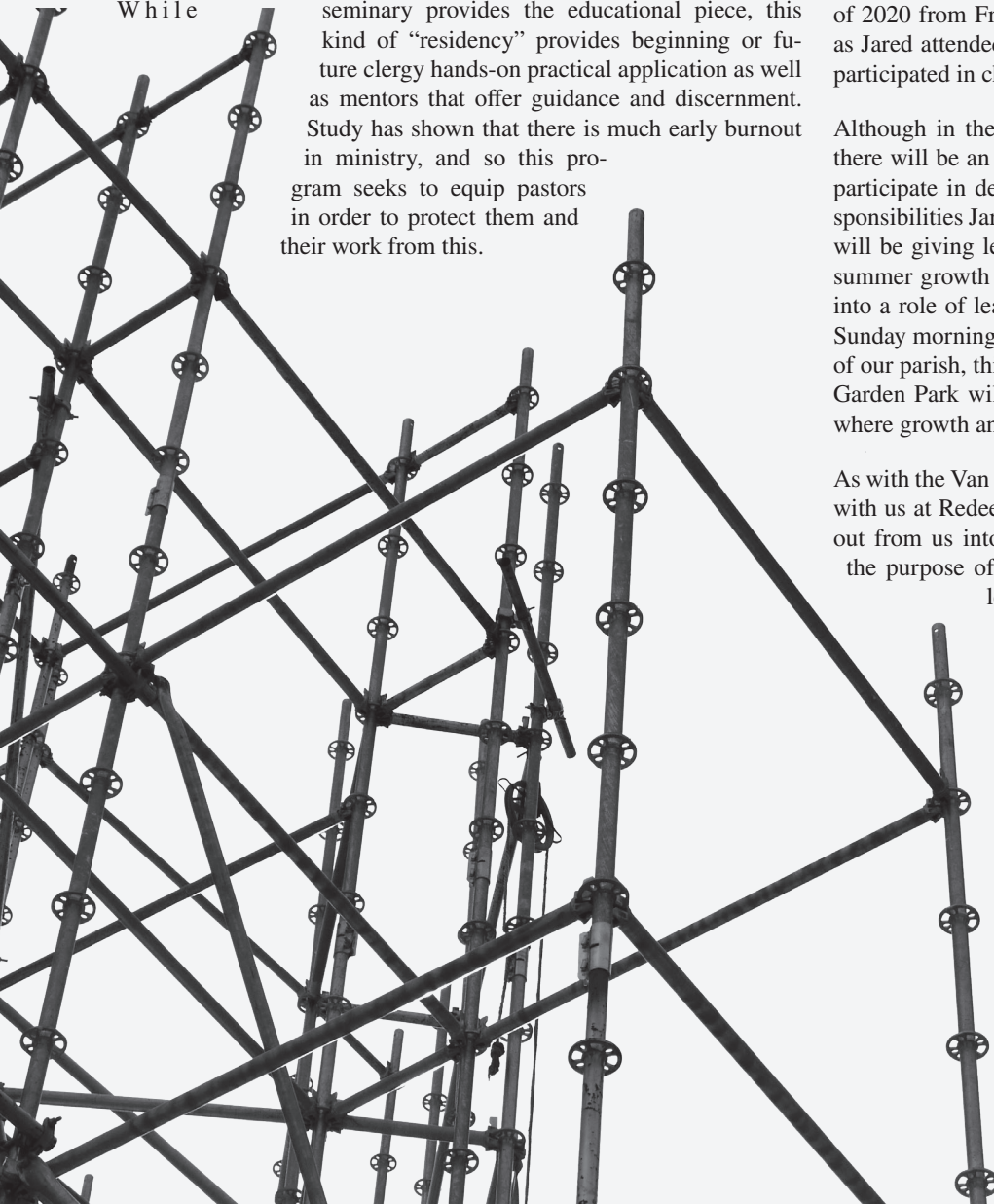
In 2020, we participated in their rigorous application process to receive a grant for our curacy program. This required filling out an application, submitting a full curacy proposal, and undergoing an extensive interview process, for which Jessie Meriwether, Alan Hawkins, and Dan Alger traveled to Kansas City right before COVID hit. Ultimately, this led to Redeemer being awarded a grant of \$145,000 in December of 2020! This grant is received over five years and is awarded incrementally as our program gradually becomes self-sustainable through funding from our local parish. Being a part of Made to Flourish not only affords us financial support, but also communal support, as it will connect our program to other programs across the country, even inter-denominationally. This will allow for collaboration and encouragement between programs, and this connection will continue even after the grant relationship with Made to Flourish is over.

This ongoing program will bring a new curate to our community roughly every two years. Having bid farewell to the Van Wagenens in fall 2020, we were on the hunt for a curate for the next season of our, and their, lives. Providentially, Dan Alger was already connected with Jared Wensyel through Always Forward, the ACNA's church planting collaboration. Jared and his wife Abbi moved to Greensboro at the end of 2020 from Frankfurt, Germany--their home for about seven years as Jared attended Freie Theologische Hochschule Gießen (FTH) and participated in church planting.

Although in the future, our curacy program will be advertised and there will be an application process, as our current curate, Jared will participate in developing that process. There is a range of other responsibilities Jared will undertake while the Wensyels are with us. He will be giving leadership to the community structures (triad groups, summer growth series, life groups) at Redeemer, as well as stepping into a role of leadership over Sunday worship and servant teams for Sunday morning. As his family goes through the membership process of our parish, this exposure to the systems of our life together at New Garden Park will give him insight into their effectiveness and areas where growth and change are needed.

As with the Van Wagenens, we anticipate that after serving in ministry with us at Redeemer for a couple of years, the Wensyels will be sent out from us into what ministry God has prepared for them. Again, the purpose of our curacy program is to participate in developing leaders before sending them out into the world to continue to build the kingdom using the unique gifts and opportunities God has ordained for them. But while the Wensyels--and indeed, curates in years to come--are with us, we will greatly benefit from their fresh voice, energy, passion, and perspective even as they benefit from training and exposure to ministry within the life of our parish.

If you have any curiosities and questions regarding this program, you are welcome to direct them to our Curacy Program Coordinator Jessie Meriwether. We hope that you will join us in extending a warm welcome to Jared and Abbi Wensyel. We are excited about what God will do through them at Redeemer, and what God will do through this program, both now and in years to come.



meet the Wensyels

Jared and Abbi had the sweet luck of having their joint love story start early in life as two 19 year-old high school sweethearts from Dayton, Ohio who met through Young Life. From the start, they both had a big heart for people and a deep desire for adventure wherever God would lead. As with their relationship, their story with Germany also began early on.

Jared's family heritage gave him a strong connection to Germany, but his heart for Germany and anguish for the German church really grew during his first trip there with his German class. Between visiting ancient churches left to be little more than museums, and spending time with youth at a German high school who were not only non-religious but strongly opposed to Christianity, it became clear that the land of Luther was no longer. Abbi's heart for Germany grew with her own collection of God-led moments. At the end of her first visit to Germany, she knew they'd be coming back to live and work in Germany.

About a year later, they married and were able to go to Frankfurt, Germany for a three month internship at a City to City Network church plant called Nordstern (German for North Star). This was a unique opportunity to experience and discern the vision they'd been dreaming of. That August, in 2014, after quitting their jobs, selling their stuff and packing up six suitcases, they moved to Frankfurt to join the church plant. Just a few days in, Jared's rhythm of interning at church and taking the train to school began, as he started at the Giessen School of Theology (Freie Theologische Hochschule) for his seminary degree. Abbi started in language school, and passed the necessary language test for a worker's visa within the first few months. She started her photography business working primarily with local businesses and social start-ups across Germany.

Both Jared and Abbi served as part of the church core team and spent most of their time building relationships. Whether through coffee dates in local cafes, taking walks along the river, or attending parties and get-togethers. One special ministry, "Ohrwurm"--a platform connecting musicians with local businesses to host small concerts--was a great way to celebrate beauty while getting the chance to meet people and have deep conversations about God and spirituality. Valentine's Day of 2015, Abbi helped to start and lead "Oasis," a ministry working to provide oasis-moments to women

working as prostitutes in Frankfurt's red-light district. It started with 30 roses and a few prayerful people and grew into a beautiful ministry! Spring the following year, in light of the Refugee Crisis, "Welcome Dinner Frankfurt" came to life, a ministry connecting refugees with locals who wanted to host a meal, welcoming the new-comers to the city.

Throughout 2018, Jared served on Nordstern's leadership team and preached on a regular basis. After graduating that October, he accepted a one year position as interim pastor. It was in that following year that Jared and Abbi began getting more acquainted with Anglicanism, specifically through the Anglican Church in Germany (part of the Reformed Episcopal Church, based in the U.S., and part of ACNA). The year ended with Jared and Abbi's confirmation to the Anglican church, and Abbi accepting a position as "Employee Experience Designer" for a Lufthansa (German airline) start-up she'd photographed: the role a mix of HR, recruiting, and office management.



In the summer of 2019, Jared was ordained as a transitional deacon in the Anglican Church in Germany and Jared and Abbi moved to a new neighborhood in Frankfurt to plant a new church. It was that fall that they were able to attend the New Wine-skins Conference and connected with Anglican leaders from around the country, including Dan Alger who Jared had already known from occasional calls across the pond.

As for many of us, 2020 was a year full of surprises! Although the year started off with regular prayer meetings in their home of a few people for a launch team, reflections of

Lent led to a turn of events. Around Easter, Jared and Abbi felt the Lord call them back stateside.

It was a hard transition but one that has brought a lot of life as well...quite literally. The week they were moving from Frankfurt, they found out they were pregnant with their first baby! So now, after a short sabbatical south of Charlotte, they've moved to Greensboro to join us here at Church of the Redeemer. Their little baby girl will be joining us in April and Jared will start as our new curate in August! They are so looking forward to getting to know people, finding new favorite places in Greensboro, and sharing more of their story as they join ours here at Redeemer!