

The Valley Evangel

Serving the Members and Friends of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, Arizona

January 2015

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Worship and Study Times

Sunday Divine Service:
9 a.m., Refreshments after the
Service

**Sunday School/Adult Bible
Class:** 10:30 a.m.

**Thursday Internet Study
Group:** 7 p.m. (ask Pastor
Webber for log-on info for this
group, or attend on selected dates
in person at his residence.)

Friday Bible Study: 10 a.m. at
the Muth residence

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From the Pastor's Desk

January is the occasion for two important observances in the church year. These observances can be overshadowed by Christmas, which looms so large not only in the Christian consciousness but also in the secular society. But we should not allow ourselves to be distracted from the festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord on January 6, or from the festival of the Baptism of Our Lord on January 11.

Epiphany commemorates the visit of the Wise Men to the boy Jesus in Bethlehem. This is not really a part of the Christmas story, because it was a separate event, which occurred approximately two years after the Lord's birth. On Christmas, Jesus came to the world. On Epiphany, the world came to Jesus – in the form of the wise men from the east seeking him out, and worshiping him as the King of the Jews and as their own divine King.

Sometimes in the popular parlance of past generations, Epiphany was described as “Little Christmas.” The Christmas festival on December 25, and the Epiphany festival on January 6, were like bookends, on either end of the twelve-day celebratory season of Christmas. So, don't let your observance of the twelve days of Christmas fade out with a wimper. Come to church for “Little Christmas” – for the Epiphany Day Divine Service – at 7 p.m.!

The Baptism of Our Lord was traditionally observed on the same day as Epiphany, but for the past several decades, many liturgical churches have separated these two festivals, so that the unique focus of each can be given its proper due. In his baptism, Jesus entered upon his public ministry. According to his human nature, he was therein endowed with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to empower him for that ministry. His baptism was, therefore, the equivalent of his ordination. But it was more than that.

When Jesus, the righteous one, submitted himself to a baptism that was intended for the unrighteous, he thereby expressed his solidarity with sinful humanity, and allowed the sins of the world to be imputed to him. And he, in turn, sanctified the water of this sacrament in such a way that his righteousness was, in a sense, put into that water, so that it will now cling to those who are washed in it. He became dirty with our sins and unrighteousness in his baptism, so that we can become clean with his righteousness and forgiveness in our baptism.

This understanding is reflected, in part, in what St. Paul wrote to Titus: “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (3:4-7, ESV).

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So, on the festival of Our Lord's Baptism on January 11, we will not only remember his baptism, but we will also remember our own. We will thank God for the "great exchange," by which Christ carried our sins to the cross and died for them there; and by which we are now justified in Christ, by faith, and are made clean before God through his mercy and obedience.

– Pastor Webber



Chaplain Moldstad to Visit

The Rev. Donald Moldstad, Chaplain at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota, will be our guest on Sunday, January 11. He will preach in the service, and will then make a special presentation on Bethany Lutheran College during the Bible Study hour, and will especially share with us some stories of his ministry with international students.

Library News

A recommended new book in the church library is *The Fire and the Staff* by Klemet I. Preus (230.41), given by a donor. "Through stories of his own pastoral experiences, reflections on the Lutheran Confessions, the writings of Martin Luther, and Scripture itself, Klemet I. Preus explores the impact of the American Evangelical and Church Growth Movements on the modern Lutheran Church. He reminds readers that practice and doctrine are inextricably linked for those who are the body of Christ. *The Fire and the Staff* captures the relationship between doctrine and practice. Doctrine is like a fire. It lights our way and warms us. Doctrine and practice are more closely related, even interdependent, than is often realized. Doctrine affects practice and practice affects doctrine. The two are so intimately woven together that when you change one, you will inevitably change the other, sometimes without realizing what has happened" (from the Introduction). Concordia Publishing House.

Other new books are: *The Spirituality of the Cross* by Gene Edward Veith (230.41), *The Christian Faith* by Robert Kolb (230.41), *Defending Your Faith* by Dan Story (239), *A Theology to Live By* by Herman A. Preus (230.41), and *Getting Into the Theology of Concord* by Robert D. Preus (238.41), all also published by CPH.

All of the new books were on Pastor Webber's book recommendations in the October 2009 newsletter.

Ladies' Guild News

Happy 2015! May your year be blessed and filled with the continuing peace and joy which come from our Lord!

Wow, what a busy December, as it always is for all of us! Our soup suppers went well. Although we were low in numbers, the soups were delicious, and the fellowship, as always, was enjoyable. Thank you to those who contributed by providing soup for these evenings.

Church decorating and cleaning, scheduled on Saturday, December 13, was not as well attended as we had hoped. However, with the help of many who stayed after the service and Bible Class on Sunday, December 14, we were able to get it all done. Many thanks to those who took the time to come on Saturday and to those who stayed on Sunday to help make our church clean and beautiful for the Christmas season! Thank you also to all who contributed toward purchasing the beautiful poinsettias. Once again, the altar looks beautiful!

Save the date, ladies! The ELS Arizona-California Women's Mission Rally will be held on February 7, 2015, at Family of God Lutheran Church in Fort Mohave, Arizona. There are registration forms available in the fellowship hall, on the table among the various sign-up sheets. Registration is \$10. There may be carpool options, so if you are interested in attending please see Lori Wendt, and we can try to make arrangements for travel.

Many have contributed to our coffee and snacks prior to the Sunday Bible study. We thank you for all the delicious goodies. We surely are blessed to have all those who bring these treats for us to enjoy! Also, a special thank you to those who come in early to set up the coffee and prepare the table for our coffee fellowship. We sure do appreciate the extra time you take on your Sunday morning.

Our ladies group needs to grow! So, to any women who would like to be a part of our group and share in the responsibilities for our church: we sure could use your help! Just come to our next meeting, which will be held on January 25. All women are welcome!

–Lori Wendt, Ladies' Guild President

The Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord

And it all started with John, charging out of the water: "No! No! No! This isn't right. You? Here? For this? This is a baptism of repentance, Jesus! This is a sinner's baptism! This is for people who need their lives turned around and transformed. I need you to administer it to me." But Jesus won't be put off. "Allow it to be so now, John, in order to fulfill all righteousness."

And what did John make of that? What do we make of it? Jesus stands on the banks of the Jordan and strips off his clothes, and descends into the water for John to baptize him, just like all the other sinners there were baptized. Jesus says that's how he will fulfill all righteousness, that's how he will make his righteousness available for all people. His uprightness, His holiness, His worthiness, His unbroken "yes" to the will of the Father brings him down to the water to stand together with us bunch of sinners who have spoken countless "no's" to the will of God.

The incarnation was a great marvel, to be sure: that God should take on human flesh and blood. But here is a greater marvel, that God the Son in that human flesh and blood should stand together with us sinners. He stands with us in the water under the verdict of condemnation that we might stand with Him in the water and hear the verdict of righteousness, the announcement that in and with Him we are beloved children of the Father. In the water already there looms the shadow of the cross and the sweet swap.

So what happens, then, as Jesus comes up, dripping wet? John is astonished. There above Jesus in the water, heaven itself is opened, and as John looks up, he sees far more than sky. He gasps as he is given an

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unfathomable glimpse into the overwhelming love and joy of heaven itself. He sees the Spirit coming down from heaven with the gentleness of dove and lighting on Jesus. He hears the Father's voice speak words of tenderness and unimaginable love: "This is my beloved Son, in Him I am well-pleased." Luther adds that there would certainly have been all the angels present too, for where Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are there is all of heaven itself.

Such shining glory God imparts to the waters of Baptism not merely to grace the occasion of the Son's standing in solidarity with the plight of a sinful human race, but above all to show us what He gives and imparts in every Baptism; what He gave you on the day of your baptism. An open heaven. The gift of the Spirit. The joy of being a beloved child of the Father.

Yes, on the day you are baptized, heaven itself is open to you. Above the water that poured over you, the Cherubim sheathe their swords and the gates to paradise swing open wide. Heaven is not barred and sealed to the baptized. It stands open wide to you - your true home.

Yes, on the day you were baptized, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and lighted on you. To live with you and never leave you again. He who is the personal Joy and Love that has always existed between the Father and the Son, He made an entrance into your life and promised to be with you for all time, imparting to you His endless Life which is Love and Joy. He brings and keeps alive in you the gift of faith.

Yes, on the day you were baptized, God the Father peeped down from heaven and said before all his angels and all the world: "Look! This is my own child! This is my beloved! How pleased I am with this one!"

And you say: "Oh, pastor, come on. A little bit of water and few words and all of that is the result? How can water accomplish all of that? How can water do such great things?" Ah, you know the answer to that, don't you? "It is not the water that does them, but the Word of God which is in and with the water and faith which trusts that Word of God in the water." So God makes foolish the wisdom of the world! "The splash of the water, the power of the Word, and the Spirit now binds you to Jesus the Lord. And wonder of wonders, though by sin defiled, the Father in heaven now makes you His child." (Coleman)

That you might never doubt that the events of Christ's baptism were the guarantee of what God does for you in your own Baptism, Christ gave a command in the last chapter of Matthew's Gospel. "As you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Father, Son, and Holy Spirit show up again, don't they? This time not at the Jordan, but wherever the water landed on you.

Where God's name is, there is God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In and with the water, And so that water becomes far more than H₂O. With the Triune God thrown in as the seasoning (Luther), it is truly a life-giving water, because He is a life-giving God. It drives away death and hell and makes eternally alive, because He is there.

All this we celebrate today on the Baptism of Our Lord. In the joy of faith you cling to the events of Jesus' Baptism and know that they for you too, that on the day you are baptized, heaven is opened for you, the Spirit given into you, and the Father owns you as his own much-loved child. Know that the gifts given you in the water are irrevocable. You may leave them, but they will never leave you. And if you have wandered away from your Baptism, you need only return to it again. It remains in all its fullness - an open heaven, the gift of the Spirit, divine sonship all in and with Jesus Christ in the water. And for that all glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen!

– Pr. William Weedon, used by permission

Redeemer Lutheran Church
January 2015

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
				1 Internet Study Group canceled	2 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Muth residence	3
4 Christmas 2 9 a.m. DS 10:30 a.m. AC/SS	5	6 Epiphany 7 p.m. DS	7	8 7 p.m. Internet Study Group (but not from Pastor's residence)	9 Bible Study canceled	10
11 Baptism of Our Lord 9 a.m. SW with Spoken Communion 10:30 a.m. SS/Bethany Lutheran College Presentation	12	13	14	15 7 p.m. Internet Study Group (but not from Pastor's residence)	16 Bible Study canceled	17
18 Epiphany 2 9 a.m. DS 10:30 a.m. Congregational Forum	19 7 p.m. Voters meeting at the church (rescheduled from Jan. 12)	20	21	22 7 p.m. Internet Study Group at/from Pastor's residence	23 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Muth residence	24
25 Epiphany 3 9 .m. SW with Spoken Communion Ladies' Guild meeting after the service 10:30 a.m. AC/SS	26	27 7 p.m. Elders' Meeting at the Anderson residence	28	29 7 p.m. Internet Study Group at/from Pastor's residence	30 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Muth residence	31

Abbreviations:

DS – Divine Service; SW – Service of the Word; AC/SS – Adult Bible Class/Sunday School

Divine Service – Full Word and Sacrament Service with Communion, on 1st, 3rd and 5th Sundays, and on major festivals

Service of the Word – a brief spoken order of Holy Communion follows the public service on the 2nd and 4th Sundays

Refreshments are served after the Sunday morning Services

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First Class Mail

We're on the Internet!
redeemerscottsdale.org

Notice!

Audio recordings of sermons
and of entire services are
available on the church
website.



About Redeemer Lutheran Church

Our mission is faithfully to preach the Word of God, both Law and Gospel, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; correctly to administer the Holy Sacraments for the forgiveness of sins; and to reach out to those who have not yet come to faith in Christ Jesus.

