

The Valley Evangel

Serving the members and friends of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, Arizona

January 2016

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Worship and Study

Sunday Divine Service
9 am; refreshments after the service

Sunday School/Adult Bible Class: 10:30 am

Thursday Internet Study Group: 7 p.m. (ask Pr. Webber for log-in info.)

Friday Bible Study: 10 a.m. at the Odean Olsen residence

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From the Pastor's Desk

The Festival of the Epiphany of Our Lord is one of the four major festivals of Christ in the church year. The other three are Christmas, Easter, and Ascension. The word “epiphany” means “manifestation.” The theme of the Festival of the Epiphany, which commemorates the visit of the Magi to the boy Jesus, is the *manifestation* of Christ to the gentiles.

God had established his chosen nation from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But most of us who read this newsletter are, according to our ethnicity and family heritage, gentiles. The patriarchs of Israel are not our ancestors. But this does not mean that God forgot about our forbears, or about us. When the Messiah of Israel was finally sent, he was sent also for us.

When Jesus was born, the angel announced to the Jewish shepherds outside of Bethlehem that their Savior had been born. And they then walked the few miles that they needed to traverse, to find him and worship him. But Jesus came into the world not only for those who were close to him – religiously, culturally, and geographically. He came also for those who were far away. He came also for our ancestors, and for us.

The story of Epiphany is the story of the star announcing to the Magi in the East – many, many miles from Bethlehem – that also *their* Savior had been born. And so they launched out on a major trek, traversing deserts and plains, crossing rivers, and exposing themselves to all kinds of danger, so that they could find, and worship, the Redeemer of the entire human race. Epiphany is, in a sense, the Christmas of the gentiles. It is, in a sense, *our* Christmas.

Those in the world today, who are invited by the story of Epiphany to come and worship Christ today, are indeed often very far away from him when they receive that invitation. Their hearts are enslaved by the fear of death. Their minds are darkened by the satanic lies they believe. Their wills are perverted by a self-destructive yearning after sin. Their consciences are twisted

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From the Pastor's Desk, continued from page 1

by a hatred for that which is their only hope. But these gentiles of today are nevertheless invited by the star of Bethlehem to come and find Jesus, and to worship Jesus, as he makes himself available to us today in his Word and sacraments. Even if they must come, as it were, from a great distance, they are still invited to come. The star of the gospel draws them, and energizes them, to come. That star invites all gentiles – and all Jews as well! – to receive Christ into their hearts, minds, wills, and consciences. The star offers to all gentiles – and to all Jews! – the liberation, the enlightenment, the purification, and the peace that only Jesus can give.

The visit of the Magi was an important event in the life of Christ on earth. The Festival of the Epiphany is, accordingly, an important observance in the church year for us. Especially if you are a gentile, come to church on Epiphany. Worship the Savior who was sent for you, and who has been manifested to you. I look forward to seeing you on Wednesday, January 6, at 7 p.m. This is your festival! This is your Christmas!

– Pastor Webber

Adult Class Series Continues

The special Sunday Adult Class video series, “Yeshua,” that began in December, will continue into January. On January 3 we will view and discuss the fourth episode, “The Bread of Sacrifice”; and on January 17 we will view and discuss the fifth and last episode, “Ripple of Darkness, Wave of Light.” (January 10 will be skipped, because a congregational forum will be held that day. This is a correction of what was previously announced.) Please join us! The DVDs that are being used are the personal property of Pastor Webber, but if you missed one or more of the episodes, or if you want to watch one or more of them a second time at home, you may borrow the DVDs from him.

Worldview Conference

Pastor Webber will be one of the speakers at the 2016 San Antonio Biblical Worldview Conference, to be held at Faith Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas, on Friday, February 5, and Saturday, February 6. The topic of his talk will be “The Biblical and Christian Worldview: The Lens through which We Look at Ourselves and the World.” Other speakers and topics will be Dr. Adam Francisco, “Submission and Domination: Muslim Worldview and Islamic Ideology”; Attorney Mark O. Stern, “How Legalized Same-Sex Marriage Will Impact Christians, Churches, and Schools”; Rev. Joseph Abrahamson, “Christ in Word and Sacrament versus Evolution”; and Professor Allen Quist, “How to Connect Unbelievers to the Gospel – the Use of Natural Law in Evangelism.” For more details, see the conference webpage: flc-sa.org/biblical-worldview-conference

Arizona-California Circuit Mission Rally

The Women's Mission Rally for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Arizona-California Circuit will be hosted this year by our Ladies Guild at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Scottsdale, on Saturday, February 20. Featured speakers will be Rev. Steven Petersen, ELS Missions Administrator, Mankato, Minnesota; and Rev. Bruce E. Ahlers, Pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church (WELS), Sun City, Arizona. Pastor Ahlers formerly served as a missionary in Indonesia and Albania. Registration and coffee will be from 8:30 to 9 a.m. The program begins at 9 a.m. and should adjourn by 3 p.m. The registration fee (which includes lunch) is \$10.00. Babysitting is available. Both women and men are welcome!

Alpha Pregnancy Crisis Center

On December 13 two representatives from the Alpha Pregnancy Counseling Center in Phoenix made a presentation to our congregation on the activities of the center. Alpha is run solely on donations, so they are always in need of money and donated items to continue their work. They have a great need especially for diapers and baby wipes, and will also gladly accept donations of new or gently used clothing for infants up to size 4T, baby bottles, formula, baby food, and just about anything else that a new mother might need.

Starting in January the Ladies Guild will move our church's collection area for the Alpha Pregnancy Counseling Center from the Sunday School classroom to the Fellowship Hall. This new collection center will consist of an information table and a bassinet in which donated items can be placed. The new location should raise awareness of the valuable work performed at the Center, and of the current needs of their clients. All donations are tax-deductible.

Alpha Pregnancy Counseling Center provides life-affirming help and guidance to women with crisis pregnancies in the Phoenix area, and is affiliated with the WELS/ELS. Please consider giving what you can, as this is very important, life-saving work.

Interview: Pr. Bruce Ahlers *Conducted by Erica Olson, Editor Assistant*

Erica: Hi, Pastor Ahlers. Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I know that you and your wife aren't members, but I hear you're going to be speaking at our upcoming Women's Mission Rally on February 20, and thought people might like to learn a little bit about you, and maybe you could encourage people to come. What do you plan to talk about at the rally?

Ahlers: I plan to tell and show, with pictures and video, what it was like to live and work as a missionary in Indonesia and Albania. I hope to have little bit of an update on what has happened in those places since I left.

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Erica: If there are people reading this who aren't sure yet whether to come to the rally, what might you say to encourage their attendance?

Ahlers: You will be taken to two parts of the world, far from here, and not well known to Americans, Indonesia and Albania. Many people don't even know where they are. But the WELS is doing mission work in both places, and national churches are being planted.

Erica: Awesome! I'm looking forward to going already! Tell me about some of the mission work you've done. .

Ahlers: Those are the two places overseas I have done mission work. In both places I started with preaching and leading a congregation, but then did most of my work teaching men to become evangelists and pastors. I will save the anecdotes for the presentation.

Erica: That's fair. How long have you been a pastor? What led you to become one?

Ahlers: I graduated from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 1976, after which I was assigned to a new mission in Kansas City, Missouri. I served there less than two years before accepting the call to Indonesia where I served for 14 years. That was followed by 9 years in Jackson, Michigan, 6 years in Albania, and now 6 years so far [at Our Savior's Lutheran Church] in Sun City, Arizona. Through some presentations in my home church in Nebraska, I started dreaming of becoming a missionary when I was in 6th or 7th grade. That transitioned into becoming a pastor, only to be changed back to missionary when I went to Indonesia.

Erica: Were you married when you started seminary?

Ahlers: When I went to seminary, you were not allowed to be married until after your first year of seminary (unless you started training later in life). I met my wife Barbara in my vicar year (serving in Michigan, though she is from Wisconsin) and we were married a little over a year after I graduated.

Erica: How long have you and your wife been married?

Ahlers: I guess you can figure that out from what I said above.

Erica: Where did you grow up? How did your family react to your decision to become a pastor?

Ahlers: I grew up on several farms in northern Nebraska. My father was especially proud of my becoming a pastor. I think he was also proud of my being a missionary, but that was harder for the family to accept. When we moved to Indonesia in 1979, our first daughter was two months old, and it was 3-1/2 years before we were able to return to the States. Our son was born during that time. Our parents were able to visit once each early in our 14 years there. Later furloughs were 2 years apart, which helped.

Erica: Tell me about your family.

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Ahlers: We have four children. Our oldest daughter, Kerry, is a nurse, just married this past summer, and lives outside Detroit. Our one son, Christopher, comes next; he has been married 12 years but has no children, lives not far from where Kerry lives, and is a mechanical engineer working on designs of small jet engines. Next is Julie, who graduated as a Lutheran elementary school teacher from Martin Luther College, married a classmate, and now lives outside of Miami with her husband and four children; they both teach in the large Lutheran school there. Our youngest, Laura, just completed her masters degree as a counselor in Mexico City (at an American college), and will soon start work in South Carolina.

Erica: What a wonderful family you have! What has your ministry in the U.S. been like?

Ahlers: Serving in Sun City, an age-restricted retirement community, is different but interesting ministry from my missionary work; so was my ministry in Jackson, Michigan, for 9 years.

Erica: Do you and your wife like to travel? Where have you gone?

Ahlers: We love to travel and have used the places where we have lived as starting points for that travel. Far-off Indonesia allowed us to stop at places like London and Hong Kong on the way to and from there; we took vacations in Bali, which is in Indonesia. From Michigan we explored states like Maine, West Virginia, and Tennessee. Albania was close to Greece and Italy, which we visited more than once. And there are so many national parks accessible from Arizona. We have visited Yosemite, Bryce, Zion, Yellowstone, Glacier, and of course the Grand Canyon, but we are just getting started. We like to camp in our little pop-up trailer.

Erica: That sounds really nice! I'd like to visit some of those places eventually. What kind of hobbies do you have?

Ahlers: I like photography, carpentry, computers, and working on cars.

Erica: Sounds pretty well-rounded to me. What would you like people at our church to know about you that I haven't asked about yet?

Ahlers: You have pretty well covered it. I look forward to being in your midst.

Erica: We look forward to having you at the Women's Mission Rally on February 20! Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview.



More Ladies Guild News

The 2016 officers for the Ladies Guild will be the same volunteers as 2015. President: Carole Clingan. Vice President: Susan Muth. Secretary: Erica Olson. Treasurer: Erika Schmeissing. Committee Chairpersons are Angie Kohlgraf (Altar), Cheryl Hartigan (Hospitality), and Carole Clingan, Lori Wendt, and Susan Muth (Fellowship – 3 co-chairs).

Post-Christmas un-decorating will take place on Sunday, January 3, immediately following the Adult Class. If enough volunteers are present the job should not take very much time. Some gentlemen will be needed to help move and climb the ladders, and to help pack and store the heavier decorations.

Further ahead into February, the Ladies Guild would like to schedule an extra meeting for Sunday, February 7, immediately following the Divine Service. We will be discussing the final plans for the Mission Rally on February 20. They will still have a meeting during the regular time slot on February 21.

Epiphany Day Divine Service: Wednesday, January 6, 7 p.m.



“The Christmas of the Gentiles”

<i>Redeemer</i>		<i>Lutheran Church</i>		<i>January 2016</i>		
Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
					1 Bible Study canceled	2
3 Christmas 2 9 a.m. DS 10:30 a.m. SS/AC	4	5	6 Epiphany 7 p.m. DS	7 7 p.m. Internet Study Group	8 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Odean Olsen residence	9
10 Baptism of Our Lord 9 a.m. DS 10:30 a.m. SS/Congregational Forum	11 7 p.m. Voters meeting at the church	12	13	14 7 p.m. Internet Study Group	15 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Odean Olsen residence	16
17 Epiphany 2 9 a.m. DS Ladies' Guild 10:30 a.m. SS/AC	18	19	20	21 7 p.m. Internet Study Group	22 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Odean Olsen residence	23
24 St. Timothy 9 a.m. SW with Spoken Communion 10:30 a.m. SS/AC	25	26 7 p.m. Elders meeting	27	28 7 p.m. Internet Study Group	29 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Odean Olsen residence	30
31 Epiphany 4 9 a.m. DS 10:30 a.m. SS/AC						

Abbreviations:

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

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

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.



We're on the Internet!
redeemerscottsdale.org

Audio recordings of Pastor Webber's sermons, and of entire services, are posted each week on the church website.