


# The Valley Evangel

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

March 2017

<i>Inside this issue...</i> <i>Visit from Pr. Basel .....Page 2</i> <i>Women's Mission Rally Report .....Pages 3-5</i> <i>Lent Schedule / Choir Rehearsals .....Page 5</i> <i>Devotion .....Page 6</i> <i>Calendar..... Page 7</i> <i>About our Church..... Page 8</i>	<i>Worship and Study</i> <b>Sunday Divine Service</b> 9 am; Refreshments after the service <b>Sunday School/Adult Bible Class:</b> 10:30 am <b>Thursday Internet Study Group:</b> 7 p.m. (Ask Pr. Webber for login information) <b>Friday Bible Study:</b> 10 a.m. at the Muth residence	<i>Newsletter Staff</i> <b>Editor:</b> Pastor David Jay Webber <b>Editorial Assistant/ Layout and Design:</b> Erica Olson <b>Production Assistant/ Printing and Distribution:</b> Sarah Kissinger 
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## From a Pastor's Desk

*The title of this month's column, as written above, is not a typo. Because your pastor was very much under the weather at the time when he would otherwise have written a column, we are (with permission) borrowing something from Pastor Webber's son-in-law, Rev. Andrew Soule, of the Belview Lutheran Parish in Minnesota. Lent is a season of repentance. Certainly we repent every day of every season – or at least we should. But in Lent, this aspect of our Christian faith and life takes on a special emphasis and focus. Pastor Soule's words can therefore serve us very well as we enter into this sacred season.*

### *Repentance & Baptism*

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38, ESV).

"Repent!" is the command that Peter gives in this Scripture passage. Repent! What does it mean to repent? The word "repent" literally means, "to change one's mind," or "to have a change of heart." Of course, if you "change your mind" it usually means that you are admitting that, at first at least, you were wrong. That being said, the notion of admitting one's self to be "wrong" runs contrary to our culture's thinking. The common adage that people tend to throw around nowadays is, "What's right and wrong for you might not be right or wrong for me." Our culture tends to see truth as *relative* to one's vantage point.

Nevertheless, Peter is anything but *relative* in this section of Scripture. Here, in Acts chapter two, Peter is delivering a sermon before the crowd gathered at Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-36). Peter points out to all the people that were present that God lovingly sent his Son Jesus into the world to save humanity, and that sinful humanity decided to crucify Jesus instead of accepting his message of salvation. Tough words. Peter is literally pointing at the crowd and saying, “You are sinners. You are wrong. You crucified the Son of God himself. What do you have to say for yourselves?” We are told that the people were “cut to the heart” and stricken with guilt. They realized their sin and asked Peter, “What shall we do?” Peter’s response to them is not demanding or full of malice. But rather, Peter simply says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Repent, that is, have a change of heart. Admit that you have been wrong. Confess your sins to God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of all your sins. Of course, admitting that we’re wrong isn’t something we can do willingly on our own. We need the Holy Spirit’s help. He works within our hearts, to show us our sins, so that each day, we can take a deep breath, bow our heads and say, “Yes, God, I have sinned and I need your help.” And how does God respond when we repent of our sins? He forgives us. He takes cooling water, pours it over our heads, and washes us clean of our sins. He washes away all the filth and the guilt, and makes us pure and holy in his sight, forgiving us because of Jesus, our Savior, and the salvation he acquired for us on the cross.

Chances are, if you were baptized as an infant like me, you probably don’t remember your baptism. However, even though we may not mentally remember our baptism, and what it was like, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we experience our baptism every day in our life of faith. We look back to our baptism and we see the power that it has: the power to comfort us, the power to forgive us, the power to help us to repent, to start fresh every day in God’s grace and forgiveness. Repentance and baptism are intimately tied together. Whenever we confess our sins, we receive the forgiveness and blessings of our Baptism anew. To repent is to re-affirm one’s baptism; to live in God’s grace and forgiveness each and every day of our lives.

– Pastor Andrew Soule

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## *Visit from Rev. Daniel Basel*

Rev. Daniel Basel, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Giving Counselor, will be our guest preacher and worship leader on Sunday, March 19. He will also make a presentation after the service that day during the Adult Class hour. As ELS Giving Counselor, Pastor Basel does encourage support of our seminary and missions. But his chief goal has been to help God’s people thrive in their individual callings to be faithful stewards of all that our Lord has entrusted to their care; and to use those resources to provide for themselves, for their families, and for the spreading of the Gospel to all people and to all generations. A critical part of this work has been to emphasize the importance of sustaining, both while we live and beyond our lifetimes, our local parish’s preaching and teaching ministries. That encouragement also involves joining together with the other congregations of our synod to support the work of missions at home and around the world, as well as the teaching ministries of our synod (e.g. Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary).

## *Report on the Arizona-California Circuit Women's Mission Rally on February 11*

The opening devotion was conducted by Pastor Dale Jaech. His sermon centered on his 1983 first experiences of the southwest desert, and realized the potential in this land if you just add *water*. The fields surrounding Yuma yielded hay, vegetables, melons and citrus fruit orchards. He noted that the climate and terrain of the Southwest mimics the Holy Land. The text for the Rally Theme came from Micah 4:1-2: "Come let us go up the mountain of the Lord..." The Homily truly reflected the role of Bishop's surrounding mountains: "The Mountain of the Lord Waters the Nations."

Rev. Matthew Behmer of Christ the King, Bell Gardens, California, spoke on "Training and Preparation for Hispanic Outreach, Timeline from Mexico to South America." Rev. Behmer lived in Puebla, Mexico, with his family for four months where they were immersed in learning the Spanish language and Mexican culture. He went to school at the Language Institute for 6 hours a day: 4 hours of grammar and 2 hours of conversation. Rev. Behmer had to keep eye contact with his instructor while preaching a sermon in Spanish or else he had to start the sermon all over. There are 3 WELS congregations in the Puebla vicinity. In Mexico most people are Catholics and all others are "Christians." Baptisms are an all-day celebration in the Mexican culture, supplemented with enormous meals, Mariachi bands and circus-like entertainment for the children. Birthdays are another popular celebration, with a cake, food and the ever-present Mariachi band. Other interesting facts about the Mexican culture include the open black market where one can buy just about anything. (Mexicans prize material possessions). Mexicans are relatively formal dressers: *No one* wears shorts! The soft shelled Taco is the main food of choice in Mexico, much like the American sandwich. The Mexican Media is extremely biased against the USA. Dramatic culture-driven billboards post disparaging comments about the USA.

Most Mexicans are nominally Roman Catholic, but the focus of the Church is not on Jesus, but on Mary. The majority of Mexicans do not have a knowledge and understanding of Christ, and that He died for their sins. There is no hope or good news in these churches. Some Catholic elements are taken out and replaced with superstition and worship of the dead. Drug dealers especially worship the dead. Mexican Catholics must pay the priests for all sacramental services of the Church. This practice results in wealthy priests who all drive new cars while most congregants are poor and must ride a bus.

Rev. Behmer mentioned a few reasons why many Mexicans want to move to the USA: Crime is *huge* in Mexico. Bus hijacking is a common occurrence. Billboards around Puebla display telephone numbers to call if your bus is being hijacked. There were 400 bus hijacks on the route the Behmers took to school. Kidnapping is also common. Children are kidnapped for organ harvesting. Babies are kidnapped and given to beggars to generate more sympathy and cash. Young women are kidnapped for sex-trafficking, and are sometimes smuggled into the USA.

Reports on ELS Mission Work in Peru and Chile were also given. Terra Poto is a town in Peru, on the edge of the Peruvian jungle. Right now 40 congregations are served by Peruvian men who travel by road until it ends, then go up river by boat. One village is entirely Lutheran. Schools are first established (some funded by CrossStitch) so the villagers can be taught Spanish and learn to live better lives, get medical help and buy goods. From the school tuition churches in the jungle can then be built. Ten Peruvian men from different villages travel out of the jungle and attend seminary classes in Terra Poto. In Chile, there are three congregations served by

vicars, all second-career men. One congregation in Santiago meets in a Karate gym owned by the vicar. In Linares (where there is a housing shortage) English classes are taught at church as an outreach to bring in new members. Right now this congregation does not have a pastor, just an elder.

Rev. Behmer emphasized the importance of praying for the safety of the men traveling in the jungle, and for the congregants who hunger and thirst for the Word of God but have no pastors.

Rev. Paul Webber of Hope in West Jordan, Utah, spoke on "Outreach in an LDS culture." Mormonism in the Salt Lake City area is not as prevalent today because many newcomers are moving to Utah for jobs. So Rev. Webber expounded on why the confessional Lutheran church is well positioned for Mormon outreach. The Mormon faith, in its pure form, is both the church and state, and they regulate personal lives and finances according to the "faith". The LDS bishop does not offer spiritual care, but is the enforcer and collector. The Mormon Book of Abraham is actually a book about Egyptian mummification rites, as verified by Egyptologists. Their faith is based on the testimony of one person, Joseph Smith, whose claims cannot be verified. They say the Bible is not accurate except where it agrees with the Book of Mormon. Mormonism is anti-Trinitarian and anti-original sin. They believe that Jesus saves us "after we have done all that we can do." Much fear is generated. Utah has the highest per capita suicide rate in the country, because Mormonism deprives people of comfort and security. Lutherans are evangelical, confessional and liturgical. To reach out to Mormons, the best tactic is to be very Lutheran. Do not build a wall by asserting their religion is wrong. Mormons need to see that we have a different religion entirely. Ask questions, listen to them, and help them arrive at the same conclusions as you. Talk about Jesus, who He is, what He did. Mormons revere Jesus, but they don't understand Him.

Rev. Matthew Behmer spoke again, on "Current efforts in urban Hispanic outreach." This mission outreach in Bell Gardens has been well received in this predominately Hispanic community due to a few innovative ideas. Bell Gardens has a population of 45,000 people in a 2.4 square mile area, but it is estimated 60,000 people actually live there of which 15,000 are undocumented. The city is self-contained with its own police, fire and utility services. Avenues of outreach in this Hispanic community must follow a family approach. The needs of the community were also considered by possibly offering English classes, but there was too much competition. A door-to-door approach would not work since most of the yards were fenced in and contained vicious dogs. Facebook offered a solution by broadcasting videos explaining Baptism classes in the Lutheran Church. The offering of Quinceanera services was another Facebook presentation. Carnival-type events such as September 16 (the real Mexican Independence Day) were also considered, so as to allow Cristo Rey to become integrated into community. Good Friday services are popular and well-attended in the Hispanic culture, but surprisingly, Easter Sunday draws few worshippers. This indicates that the good news of Jesus' Resurrection is not reaching the Hispanic community. There is still much work to be done!

Rev Larry Wentzlaff, ELS Evangelism and Missions Counselor, offered a "World and Home Outreach Update." He talked about seven home missions in the states of California, Illinois, Texas and Minnesota: 1) Cristo Rey, Bell Gardens, California, which we learned about today. 2) Hudson Oakes, Texas, started in a school auditorium, then moved to a storefront which seats 80 people. Started a "Loving Life" outreach donating infant clothes and layettes to the community. Congregation has 42 members. 3) Hope Lutheran in Leandro, Texas, has 87 members and meets in a huge house which also serves as a parsonage. Recently broke ground for

a new worship facility. 4) Hope Lutheran in Farmington, Minnesota, started in a storefront and added a new annex. Congregation has 85 members. 5) Redeeming Grace in Rogers, Minnesota, originally met in a school but the school closed and so the facility is now a church. Congregation has 165 members. 6) Faith Lutheran, San Antonio, Texas, started in a house and a few years ago added a 9,000 sq ft sanctuary to the structure. Congregation has 70 members. Synod subsidy recently stopped. 7) Grace Lutheran in Lincoln, Illinois, is a small break-away church that is meeting in a coffee house. Congregation has 42 members.

The Women's Mission Society Business Meeting was then held. The minutes from last year were approved with amendments. New Business: Our Saviour, Lake Havasu City, Arizona, will host next year's rally. A motion was made to include new churches in Circuit 11 in the rally rotation. The mission offering totaled \$2,490. and a motion was made to donate entire amount to CrossStitch. This motion was overwhelmingly approved.

Rev. Bill Stehr, Faith, Irvine, California, delivered the closing devotion. His topic was a reading on the doctrine of Justification, a chief article of the Christian faith.

There were 32 people in attendance at this Rally.

– Erica Olson, Carol Clingan

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## *Lent Schedule*

During the Season of Lent, Redeemer Lutheran Church will be holding special services on Wednesday evenings. The season begins on Ash Wednesday, March 1, with a 7 p.m. Divine Service that also includes the imposition of ashes for anyone who wishes to receive them. (Ashes are optional.) Wednesday Vespers services will also be held at 7 p.m. on March 8, 15, 22, and 29, and on April 5. Each of these Vespers services will be preceded by a Soup Supper, serving from 6 to 6:30 p.m.; and will be followed by a spoken service of Holy Communion, for any communicants who wish to receive the sacrament that evening.

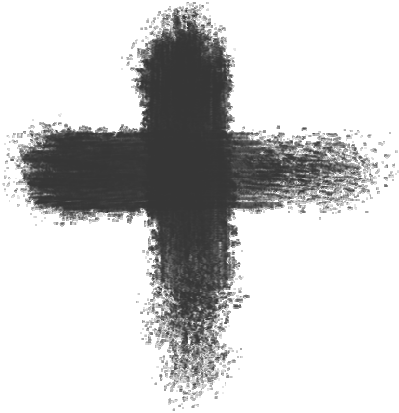
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## *Choir Rehearsals*

Choir rehearsals will be held in the organ alcove on March 19 and 26, and April 2, 9 and 16, in order to prepare an anthem for the Easter service on April 16. All voice parts are needed, and new singers are welcome. If you wish to participate, please arrive at church by 8:25 a.m. so that rehearsals can promptly begin at 8:30. Thank you, in advance, for your efforts – which will beautify our Easter Service!



## *Devotion: Ashes and Love*



Have you seen them? It only happens once a year, but you have probably noticed. They walk around with that “black stuff” on their foreheads. It looks like it is in the shape of a cross. What’s that about?

It is about Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the season of Lent. The black stuff is ash and it is worn as a sign of repentance – sorrow over sin. Ashes were often used this way by God’s people in the Old Testament. Today, Christians use them on the first day of Lent because it is a season of preparation for the remembrance of Jesus’ death.

During Lent, Christians reflect on their lives and how they have sinned against God. This isn’t a morbid self-deprecation because it leads to a greater appreciation for what Jesus did so that we can have eternal life. The more we understand our guilt, the better we grasp the greatness of Jesus’ love. If you are only a “little” sinner in your eyes, Jesus can only be a “little” Savior for you. But you are not a little sinner? God says, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). If you have sinned just once, you, according to God’s rules, deserve to die. That is no “little” matter.

God has good news for you. Don’t despair. He says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Jesus loves sinners just like you. He took your guilt upon Himself and suffered God’s wrath over your wrongs so that you are forgiven. No matter how great a sinner you are, Jesus is a greater Savior. That is how much He loves you.

Is it time for you to put on ashes and draw close to your Savior? Lent is a perfect time to do so. Join us as we gather together to reflect on our sin and the greatness of Jesus’ love. Then, you will be truly ready to remember Jesus’ death on the cross for you.

*From the ELS Board for Home Outreach*



<i>Redeemer</i>	<i>Lutheran</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>March 2017</i>			
Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
			1 <b>Ash Wednesday</b> 7 pm DS with imposition of ashes	2 7 pm Internet Study Group	3 10 am Bible Study at the Odean Olsen residence	4
5 <b>Lent 1</b> 9 am DS 10:30 am SS/AC	6	7	8 6-6:30 pm Soup Supper 7 pm Vespers with Spoken Communion	9 7 pm Internet Study Group	10 10 am Bible Study at the Muth residence	11
12 <b>Lent 2</b> 9 am SW w/Spoken Communion 10:30 am SS/AC	13 7 pm Church Council at the Muth residence	14	15 6-6:30 pm Soup Supper  7 pm Vespers with Spoken Communion	16 7 pm Internet Study Group	17 Bible Study canceled  Pr. Webber in MN for vacation, ELS Doctrine Committee	18 Pr. Webber in MN
19 <b>Lent 3</b> 8:30 am Choir 9 am SW w/Spoken Communion 10:15 am Ladies Guild 10:30 am SS/AC (Guest Pastor Daniel Basel)	20 Pr. Webber in Minnesota	21 Pr. Webber in Minnesota	22 6-6:30 pm Soup Supper  7 pm Vespers with Spoken Communion	23 7 pm Internet Study Group	24 10 am Bible Study at the Muth residence	25
26 <b>Lent 4</b> 8:30 am Choir 9 a.m. SW w/Spoken Communion 10:30 am SS/AC	27	28	29 6-6:30 pm Soup Supper  7 pm Vespers with Spoken Communion	30 7 pm Internet Study Group	31 10 am Bible Study at the Muth residence	

**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, usually on 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays, and on major festivals  
**Service of the Word**—A brief spoken order of Holy Communion follows the public service usually on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays

Refreshments are served after the Sunday morning Services.

March 2017

**The Valley Evangel**  
**Redeemer Lutheran Church**  
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**First Class Mail**

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## *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](http://redeemerscottsdale.org)

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