

The Valley Evangel

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

February 2017

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From the Pastor's Desk

St. Valentine's Day, on February 14, commemorates the martyrdom of a presbyter in Rome named Valentinus (in Latin), who was killed for his faith in 269 A.D. He was able to be identified as a Christian pastor because he went to give spiritual comfort to persecuted Christians who had been arrested and jailed by the imperial government. In addition to this fairly well documented account, there are two additional stories about Valentine that are more in the realm of legend. But those legendary stories are the ones that are perpetuated in our cultural observance of St. Valentine's Day.

The first is the story that Valentine officiated at the weddings of Christian soldiers in the Roman army, at a time when soldiers were forbidden to marry, but were encouraged instead to satisfy their sexual urges through fornication with women with whom no life-long bond had been established. This violated the conscience and moral convictions of the Christian soldiers, and so they violated the regulation against marriage for soldiers, and got married. And Valentine violated this regulation, by officiating at these weddings.

The second story is about the time when Valentine was in jail, awaiting his martyrdom. His jailer's daughter Julia, who had been blind, was healed by Valentine. The jailer's daughter and entire household (44 persons in all) became Christians, and were baptized by Valentine. Just before he was taken away to be killed, Valentine sent a letter of encouragement to Julia, which he signed "Your Valentine."

Whether these stories are true or not, or the degree to which they may be true, cannot ultimately be known. But these stories do illustrate some deeper truths about the love that we are called upon by God to bear toward one another. When Valentine was facing his own death, he was selflessly thinking about the young person who had come to faith under his ministry, more than about himself.

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And previously, he had been willing to take serious risks in order to honor the divine institution of marriage, and to encourage young people, in the midst of worldly temptations to the contrary, to get married, and to be faithful and moral within marriage.

On St. Valentine's Day, we can follow the harmless traditions of the day as they have developed in our culture. So, in good fun you can send a "Valentine" to someone, even if your life is not coming to an end; and in good fun you can think of a friend as your "Valentine," even if you are not engaged or married. But as you follow these light-hearted customs, remember the more serious stories on which those customs are based. Remember these important teachings of St. Paul, which the legends of St. Valentine illustrate:

"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4, ESV)

"Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. ...because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." (1 Corinthians 6:18-20; 7:2, ESV)

We close with these three prayers for St. Valentine's Day, the first from a Lutheran source, and the last two from our friends in the Church of England:

"Most Gracious Heavenly Father, You gave Saint Valentine the courage to witness to the gospel of Christ, even to the point of giving his life for it. Help us to endure all suffering for love of you, and to seek you with all our hearts; for you alone are the source of life and love. Grant that we may have the courage and love to be strong witnesses of your truth to our friends and family and to the whole world. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."

"God of wonder and of joy: grace comes from you, and you alone are the source of life and love. Without you, we cannot please you; without your love, our deeds are worth nothing. Send your Holy Spirit, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love, that we may worship you now with thankful hearts and serve you always with willing minds; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

"God our Father, from the beginning, you have blessed creation with abundant life. Pour out your blessings upon all who are married, that they may continue in mutual love and companionship, in holiness and commitment to each other. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen."

– Pastor Webber

Invitation from Emmaus

Our friends at Emmaus Lutheran Church (WELS), at 3841 West Sweetwater Avenue in Phoenix, are inviting us to a special service at 4 p.m. on Sunday, February 19, to mark the 25th anniversary of the ordination of their pastor, Rev. Ross Else. After the service, all are invited also to attend a meal hosted by the congregation.

Synod Special Offering

Our church body – the Evangelical Lutheran Synod – is currently conducting a special anniversary offering, called “Proclaim the Wonders God Has Done!” This two-year effort is recalling and celebrating two significant events in history: the 400th anniversary of the posting of the 95 Theses and the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation (1517-2017), and the 100th anniversary of the reorganization of the Norwegian Synod and founding of the ELS (1918-2018). The proceeds of this special offering have been designated to go to the support of the home missions of our synod, so that new congregations and outreach efforts can be established in communities of the country that are not currently served by a Confessional Lutheran congregation, or are inadequately served by such a congregation. An example of these home mission efforts is the new cross-cultural ministry that has been established At Christ the King (Cristo Rey) Lutheran Church in Bell Gardens, California – within our own circuit – to reach out to the Hispanic population of the Los Angeles area.

Because of its unique situation, our congregation is not directly participating in this special offering. But, in our own way, we can be encouraged to contribute toward *the goal and purpose* of the special offering – that is, supporting the home mission work of our church body – by another route. Redeemer currently has a financial obligation to the synod, to pay off loans that were made to our congregation in the past, and to complete the long-term plan for purchasing our church building (which is currently owned by the synod). The trustees of the synod have set up a special arrangement for us, which is allowing us to pay down these obligations with what ends up being a very low interest rate. All the money we pay to the synod, in the retirement of this debt and financial obligation, becomes immediately available to the synod for the important work that it is doing on our behalf.

So, our payments are doing “double duty,” in that they are helping our local congregation to reach the goal of becoming debt-free and of having a clear title to our property; and at the same time are helping to finance the outreach and home mission development of our national church body. If someone were to contribute directly to the synod, by means of the anniversary offering, the second “duty” would be fulfilled, but not the first “duty.” But if someone were to contribute a designated gift toward our debt retirement fund, both “duties” would be simultaneously fulfilled. This way of supporting both our local needs and our synod’s needs, at the same time, can be seen as an example of what our Lord was talking about, when he said: “For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:8b-9, ESV)

Our financial support of home mission work is indeed intended to make “friends” for ourselves – that is, new fellow believers in Christ, with whom we will spend eternity after all things of this earth have passed away. And doing this by means of the retirement of our debt to the synod, rather than by a direct contribution, is the kind of “shrewdness” that Jesus commends, since doing it in this way simultaneously serves two good and godly purposes.

So, if you can set aside a little extra money in the coming two years for your congregation’s benefit, and for you synod’s benefit, please do so. Special designated gifts to the Redeemer Lutheran Church debt retirement fund – above and beyond regular contributions to the general fund – will be used specifically for debt retirement. And as they are used for that purpose, they will thereby also be made available for the important work that the ELS is doing.

Women's Mission Rally

The ELS Arizona-California Circuit Women's Mission Rally will be held at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Bishop, California, on February 11. Several people from our congregation will be in attendance, and will deliver a contribution from our congregation to the "CrossStitch" network. CrossStitch includes all the circuit mission rallies and local mission societies of the synod, and supports special mission projects in established world mission fields of the synod. If you would like to add something to that donation, even if you are not going to attend the rally, you can make out a check to "Redeemer Ladies Guild," and note that it is for the rally. The deadline for such a contribution is Sunday, February 5. If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with Carole Clingan.

Alpha Pregnancy Resource Center

Kay Retberg, a representative from the Alpha Pregnancy Resource Center, will address us and share information about Alpha's work on Sunday, February 26, at 10:30 a.m. (during what would otherwise be the Adult Class hour). Alpha is a human care agency affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, which our congregation also supports. Through the efforts of its volunteer staff, Alpha offers life-affirming and faith-building counseling, and material assistance, to women with crisis pregnancies.

In preparation for this visit by an Alpha representative, the Redeemer Ladies Guild is conducting a "diaper drive." They are asking the members and friends of the congregation to purchase and bring in disposable diapers, sizes Newborn to 4, so that they can be presented to Mrs. Retberg when she is here, for the use of the clients of the center. Diapers can be placed on the table in the fellowship room that is already designated for Alpha donations. (Sizes 3 and 4 are most in demand.)

The Alpha Center is located at 1022 West Indian School Road in Phoenix. For more information about their work, see their website: alphaaz.org



60th Wedding Anniversary

Seasonal residents Odean and Mary Ellen Olsen celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with us after the service on Sunday, January 29. We congratulate them, and join them in thanking the Lord for the many blessings he has poured out upon them and their family over these many years.

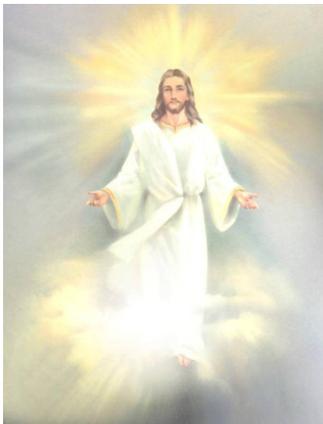
Officers Installed

Church officers for 2017 were installed during the service on January 15. They are: President Jim Bonnell, Vice-President & Head Elder Norman Hartigan, Secretary Thomas Chasty, Treasurer William Muth, Financial Secretary Karl Heine, Head Trustee & Elder Matthew Wendt, and Head Usher David Kohlgraf. Donald Schmeissing's many years of service to the congregation were also noted, and he was publicly thanked for that service. Don retired this year as Financial Secretary and Head Elder. We also thank Daniel Morehouse for his past service as Secretary and Elder.

New Books in the Church Library

Angie and Dave Kohlgraf have donated a two-volume set of books, entitled *Martin Luther and the Reformation* and *Martin Luther: Treasures of the Reformation*, published in conjunction with a highly-acclaimed historic exhibition on Martin Luther and the Reformation that they were able to visit while in Minneapolis in December.

“In autumn 2016 an exhibition commemorating the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s Reformation was shown in the American cities of Minneapolis, New York, and Atlanta. The exhibition offered a comprehensive picture of the life and work of Martin Luther, his Reformation, its cultural-historical context and lasting impact. Their focus is on unique exhibits from authentic places of Luther’s life and the history of the Reformation. The first volume is a companion to the multifaceted exhibition. In 50 essays by general as well as church and art historians, culture and mentality historians, archaeologists as well as economic and social historians, it presents state-of-the-art research on the Reformation. The scope of topics ranges from Martin Luther’s geographical and ideological origins to Lutherans in America. The essays are supplemented by 18 maps and infographics with background information in some cases presenting important developments and networks in this manner for the first time. The second volume, a catalogue of the exhibit, brings together a thematically structured description of the various exhibits, most of which are being shown abroad for the first time. Original Luther objects and autographs as well as archaeological finds from the Luther sites in Eisleben, Mansfeld, and Wittenberg illuminate the personality of the Reformer and his environment. They are supplemented by a spectacular collection of artistic and graphic masterpieces, sculptures, art objects and important printed works.” (OCLC)



Devotion: I Will Remember Your Sins No More

Way back in the day if you made a mistake while typing you pulled out the little bottle of “White Out” and brushed over the typo. Then came the erasing ribbon. Then computers came along and we no longer needed “White Out” or erasing ribbon, we simply hit the delete key.

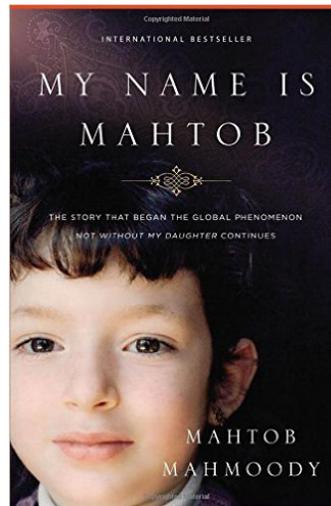
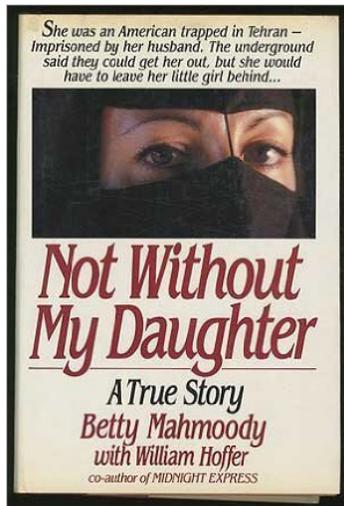
What if we dealt with our sins in the same way? Well, it doesn’t work that way. There is not enough “White Out” in the world to cover your sins. There is not an erasing ribbon long enough to make your sins go away. And even when you delete your mistakes on the computer, don’t be fooled, they are still out there somewhere. Nothing on a computer is ever truly deleted. God sees them all.

Your sins are not just insignificant typos. They are acts of hate. They are thoughts of lust. They are words of pain. And they have consequences. Your sins cause you and the people in your life frustration, pain, and sadness. More than that, they separate you from God.

There is only one way for your sin to be erased. Isaiah 43:25 God states, “I, even I, am he who blots out your sins, for my own sake.” How did God do that? 1 John 1:7, “The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” In Jesus there is forgiveness, full and complete. Not just for the typos of life but also for all sins, no matter how big or how far back they occurred. When Jesus said “It is finished” while hanging on the cross, God hit the delete key on all of your sins.

From the ELS Board for Home Outreach

***Thrivent Financial Sponsors: "A Story of God's Grace"
Presented by Mahtob Mahmoody***



Hear author Mahtob Mahmoody tell of captivity in Iran, a harrowing escape, and a wounded soul healed by God's goodness and love. A book-signing by Betty and Mahtob Mahmoody will follow the presentation. All are welcome, but the presentation is most suited for adults, older children, and teens. Babysitting is available.

Saturday, February 11, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.
Arizona Lutheran Academy, 6036 S. 27th Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona 85041

RSVP to rsvpf6@gmail.com by February 6, and specify number of attendees and number needing babysitting. The hardcover book, *My Name is Mahtob*, will be available for \$25.



**Join us for the Divine Service for the Festival of the
Transfiguration of Our Lord: Sunday, February 26, 9 a.m.**

<i>Redeemer</i>	<i>Lutheran</i>	<i>Church</i>	<i>February 2017</i>			
Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
			1	2 7 p.m. Internet Study Group	3 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Muth residence	4
5 Epiphany 5 9 a.m. DS 10:30 a.m. SS/AC	6 7 p.m. Church Council at the Muth residence (rescheduled from Feb. 13)	7	8	9 7 p.m. Internet Study Group	10 Bible Study canceled	11 Pr. Webber at San Antonio Worldview Conference
12 Epiphany 6 9 a.m. SW w/Spoken Communion 10:30 a.m. SS/AC Guest Pastor: Rev. Allen Schroeder)	13	14 Pr. Webber in Mankato, MN, for synod meetings	15 Pr. Webber in Mankato, MN, for synod meetings	16 7 p.m. Internet Study Group	17 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Odean Olsen residence	18
19 Epiphany 7 9 a.m. DS Ladies Guild after the service 10:30 a.m. SS/AC	20	21	22	23 7 p.m. Internet Study Group	24 10 a.m. Bible Study at the Odean Olsen residence	25
26 Transfiguration 9 a.m. DS 10:30 a.m. SS/Alpha Center Presentation	27	28 7 p.m. Elders Meeting				

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 1st, 3rd and 5th
 Sundays, and on major festivals

Service of the Word—A brief spoken order of Holy Communion follows the public service
 usually on the 2nd and 4th Sundays

Refreshments are served after the Sunday morning Services.

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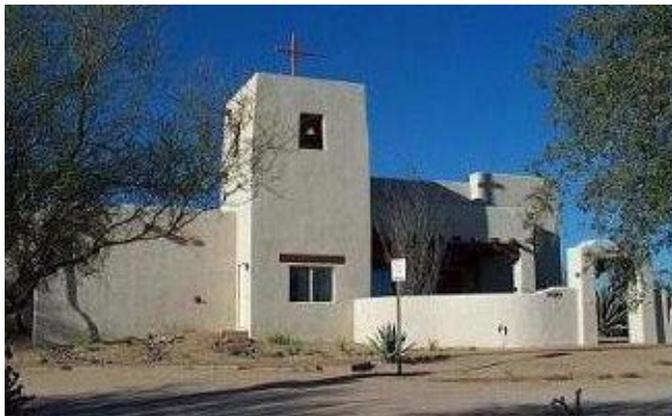
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First Class Mail

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.