



JANUARY 2025



PASTOR’S NOTES

It can be surprising as to what “pops up” on the social media app – *LinkedIn*. There are a variety of topics and surprisingly quite a few postings by Christians. One person that I follow and see frequently post is Robert E. Smith, whose bio line on *LinkedIn* says . . . *recently retired theological librarian, author, part-time Lutheran pastor.*

He is also one of the moderators for the Facebook page – *Friends of the Lutheran Church*. Recently I read the following post on *LinkedIn* as I was contemplating what to say for the January newsletter. I thought this post would be appropriate for any believer to remember as we prepare for another year living the life of discipleship by serving others with joy and gladness:

The Peace of God Sets Watch Over Our Hearts

Television, the internet, cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other technologies are a blessing and a curse. News – and rumors – spread around the world at the speed of light. Even though we live in the safest, most prosperous and healthiest time in the world’s history, the flow of news and fake news makes us think we live in the most dangerous times of all. In the United States, young adults of the millennial generation are increasingly worried about their finances, health, and safety. Although we can instantly connect with almost everyone we have ever known, they report they are lonelier than ever before.

Christians are not exceptions to this pattern. Yet God gives us ways to cope with the worries of this world. Although we have troubles in this world, we do not need to be afraid. Jesus gives us His peace. (John 14:27) St. Paul tells us how the peace of God sets a watch over our hearts and minds. This peace is ours because Jesus made peace between us and God when He died for our sins on the cross. He broke down the barrier between us once and for all. Now, nothing can separate us from the love of God. We will live with God forever.

How do we cope with the uncertainties of life that cause us to worry? Jesus advises us to focus on the kingdom of God and His righteousness. God will take care of the rest. He provides food and clothing, house and home, and everything we need. Yes, the evil of this world will complicate our lives. But Jesus will be with us until the end of time itself.

St. Paul tells us how we can do this. He told us to pray about everything, thanking God for all His blessings and bringing our requests to Him. Being thankful helps us to reset our perspective. Life is not about being a victim, but about receiving the many gifts God gives us. We know He hears our every prayer, that He loves us and will work everything to serve for our good. Knowing these things brings the peace of God to us. Like soldiers on watch over their

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PASTOR'S NOTES (CONTINUED)

camp at night, this peace protects our hearts from despair and focuses our minds on the tasks God has called us to do in this life by His grace.

Rev. Robert E. Smith
Pastor Emeritus
Fort Wayne, Indiana



Ministry Assessment Team

This team is composed of Collins Sita, James Kruse, Lucia Kruse, Caitlin Tilton, Rob Tilton, Lana Garay, and Lori Wasson

The Team met on Nov. 6, Nov. 20, Dec. 4, and Dec. 18.

The following was listed as the purpose of this team.

To determine to the best of our ability, under the Spirit's direction and guidance, what form the future ministry of Redeemer should look like moving forward in the months and years to come.

Options to Consider:

Church Child Care School
Church Child Care
Church School
Church

Several matters will be taken into consideration and open for discussion and assessment including:

For all three Ministries:

Finances and Sustainability

For the School and Child Care Ministry:

- Comparing current standards to accreditation standards, are appropriate resources available to the staff to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of the students.
- Does the staff have the qualifications to meet the academic needs of all learners in the school?
- Are students working at grade level or making progress towards grade level?
- Is there a governance system in place that will assist the Child Care and School in achieving its purpose and goals?

At the first meeting the participants were asked to rate each ministry on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being great.

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As was reported:

It soon became apparent of the difficulties and complexities of coming to an appropriate number because of the different variables that were involved in each ministry such as finances, proclaiming the truth of God's Word, relationships with one another, etc. In summary, all would agree that each ministry shows signs of strength as well as weakness.

The overall consensus after the meeting on Nov. 20 is listed below:

As was reported:

There was a healthy discussion regarding the ability of the Redeemer fellowship to conduct all three ministries – church, child care, school. The Task Force still needs to take a closer look at the financial information for each entity, however the discussion also focused on the ability of the current membership to devote the time and manpower to oversee each ministry. Thoughts and feelings were expressed, but it was also agreed that more discussion and investigation needs to be considered.

The December 4 meeting focused on these items:

School Ministry

- Is holding its own with regard to finances.
- Primary concern is the number of students at or below grade level.

Child Care

- Concerns expressed were the recent declining enrollment and the age of the building

Church

- Concerns are the ongoing declining worship and offerings
- Comparing 2021 to 2024, worship attendance is down about 54% and offerings are down about 35%

The team met again on Wednesday, Dec. 18 to continue its discussion and evaluation.

The goal of the Ministry Assessment Team is to develop a presentation for the congregation's consideration on January 19, 2025. This will allow time for members of the congregation to look over the presentation.

The Team further proposed that a Congregational meeting be held on February 16, 2025 to determine the best course of action for Redeemer Lutheran Ministries based on the information presented on January 19 as well as questions regarding the Ministry Assessment Team's report.

Yours in Christ
Pastor Craig Mathews

PRAYER REQUESTS

Healing for members: Ed & Jan DeTrow, Don & Lana Garay, Judy Guastella, Jane Harty, Steven Horvath, Jerry Lindberg, Chuck & Elaine Malecki, Lillian Miles, Mike Nagel, Tom & Sue Poyer, Jim & Bonnie Schluentz, Bob Varone, and Pauline Vickey.

School & Child Care staff & families: Brandi Fordham (Child Care staff), Karis Russell.

Friends and relatives: Carol Brasington, Charlie Finkenbine, Glenn Galway, Nick & his son, Frank (close friends of the Garay family; Frank, 22, recently lost his mother, Amy), Mikayla Hacksunda, Michelle Cote, Jesus Mathews, Dave McMullan, Esther Murphy, Becky Rurade, and Wava Zeitlow.



Church: www.redeemerfl.com
Child Care: www.redeemerfl-cc.com
School: www.redeemerfl-school.com



Redeemer Lutheran Church of Englewood
Redeemer Lutheran Child Care
Redeemer Lutheran School

~~**TREASURER'S
REPORT**~~

**Financial information is available to
all members upon request.**

Repenting of “Feasts that Know No Fast”

Fresh off the Christmas season and the retail frenzy that accompanies it, January brings a shot of frigid air into the lives of the people we know and love. This is not a meteorological statement either. While it is true that January is one of the colder months for those in North America, the cold front blast that hits us is the full force of credit card spending that fueled the retail frenzy. The bills for the gifts, the parties, the food and the travel have now come due. The credit card makes things convenient, but it also requires more discipline than many can muster. When the bills come in January for December’s celebration, it really puts a damper on things.

Congregations often make the same mistake in stewardship. We often charge forward in doing what we always do or starting new endeavors without counting the cost. But at the end of the month, or the end of year, when the bill comes due, the red ink on the congregational balance sheet smacks the people in the face like a stiff north wind in January. We hunkered down. We circle the wagons. We start to panic. The work of the Gospel suffers.

The fifth verse of “Forgive Us, Lord, for Shallow Thankfulness” (*LSB* 788) addresses this January situation. The words penned by William Watkins Reid are very needful for us to hear as we start a new year, while dealing with the bills of past efforts and expense.

“Forgive us, Lord for feast that knows not fast ...” This hits us hard, doesn’t it? We love when the money is flowing, the parties are going, and things are getting bigger and better. But there is a time in life, and most especially in our spiritual disciplines, that we need to fast. The purpose of a fast is to step back, lay something aside for a time, and replace it with meditation on Scripture and prayer. This is designed to keep us from turning something that may well be good into an idol that separates us from the God who loves us in Christ.

“For joy in things that meanwhile starve the soul ...” In “The Parable of the Sower,” we hear Jesus talk about how the worries and cares of life choke out the growth of the seed of the Word that was planted. We know how this happens in our lives. Professional and youth sports do this. Materialism does this. Travel and leisure do this. There is a list of things that we enjoy that starve the soul.

But it also happens in our congregations. When corporate stewardship is not managed in a responsible way, it can and does destroy individual stewardship. Is it good individual stewardship to support a ministry that doesn’t take its corporate responsibility seriously?

“For walls and wars that hide your mercies vast and blur our vision of the Kingdom goal.” This is the ultimate end of the idolatry of failed stewardship. We build walls between believers within the church and hamper those who are outside from coming to the Light of Life that is Jesus. The wars we fight over money and its impact on ministry do the same. It eventually blurs our vision of what we are here to do: share the Good News of Jesus. When the wintry blast of January hits us in this fashion, we are called to repent.

When the Holy Spirit uses the cold front of the call to repentance, we meet the God who forgives and restores. That is what He does for individual and corporate stewards. When the bills hit, they call us back to Jesus. He is the One who indeed forgives us our shallow thankfulness and leads us into the bounty of His mercy yet again.

Bible Studies



Sunday Morning Bible Study: Please join us after the morning service (and after a cup of coffee – approximately 10:30 a.m.). We just finished working through the book *Behavioral Covenants for Christian Communities* by Gilbert R. Rendle. A new study will be announced soon.

Table Talk: Table talk is a very informal Bible study held on Thursday mornings at 9:30 AM, immediately after the 8:45 school chapel service. Participants come with any sort of question. We work to answer those questions from God’s Word and from our Lutheran Confessions. In doing that we all learn more about God’s Word and its application in our lives. We are currently focusing on the book of Acts. One way or another there is always friendly and interesting discussion. All are welcome and encouraged to come early to attend the chapel service. Who can’t be cheered by the sound of the children’s voices? There is always coffee and usually doughnuts. Please consider joining us! **Pastor Mathews** is leading the discussion.

SERVING THE LORD

Interim Pastor Rev. Craig Mathews

Office Admin Asst Caitlin Tilton

Organist

Choir Director

Newsletter Pat Finkenbine

School Admin Wendy Horvath

Child Care Director Debby Buel

School Admin Asst

OFFICERS

President James Kruse

Vice President Mike Nagel

Treasurer Lucia Kruse

Secretary Caitlin Tilton

BOARDS

Head Elder Rob Tilton

Christian Ed. Catalina Bakas

Human Care Jean Cote

Outreach

Assimilation Joyce Krug

School Board

Stewardship

Youth Cherylann Galway

Financial

Secretary Sherrie Keesee

Property Mgmt. Steven Horvath

GROUPS/GUILDS

Altar Guild Catalina Bakas

Coffee Hour Joyce Krug

**The deadline for the February 2025 Newsletter is January 18th.
PLEASE have all your submissions sent to patchas123@gmail.com
OR drop them off at the church office by the date indicated above. Thank You!**

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1-3

K-1 December has been an extremely busy month. The children have been practicing songs for the Christmas Program and learning about the birth of Jesus. Each day we read a chapter about the 1st Christmas, this week they are learning how Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fled Egypt. We end each day with our bible lesson and let the children ask any questions they want about the lesson. We have been introducing rulers and thermometers to our 1st graders this month, they enjoy walking around the room and measuring things around them. Our Kindergarten is learning double digits and beginning to learn addition. Each day we make sure that they have a fun activity that keeps them motivated and engaged. We are looking forward to the 3rd quarter and introducing more of the Abeka curriculum. *Ms. Pam and Ms. Lacey*

2nd & 3rd During this time of year when are practicing Christmas songs for the Christmas program and decorating our room with art projects, I have noted that the students know about the true meaning of Christmas. Even though individuals share their stories about what mischief the Elf on the Shelf got into during the night, they can make the transition to a discussion about Jesus. Vocabulary plays an important part in making connections to the words in the Christmas songs. For instance, the words, “Shepherds quake at the sight,” led to a discussion on many levels. We talked about the spelling of the word ‘shepherd’ because we learned that *ph* makes the /f/ sound. Well, not in this case, which led to a discussion about exception to the rule. We talked about the meaning of the word, *shepherd*, as being a herder of sheep. Visualizing that endeavor is a strong tool to use for comprehension. We tried to imagine how overwhelmed they must have been to *quake at the sight*. The shepherds would never have thought that they would be part of the birth of Jesus. What a wonderful time of year for the students to make connections to their own lives about the birth of Jesus, our Redeemer and Savior. *Ms. Donna*

4th & 5th Our students have been working diligently on all their subjects. Many have raised their grades. We are practicing memory verses Isaiah 9:6-7 and Isaiah 53:1-6. The Christmas program is coming along nicely. I hope you can come on Wednesday December 18th at 6pm to see over 50 children minister to you through songs and readings of the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Have a wonderful Christmas. We will See you January 6th, 2025. In His Service, *Ms. Fran*

6th & 7th Hello Redeemer Parishioners greetings from 6th and 7th grades. We are wrapping up the second quarter of our school year. It has been an exciting second quarter, our plants for the bees have finally matured to be put outside by the class. In History, both the classes have been learning about all 50 States and Capitals. They have started working on a Research paper on a Famous Scientist. In Math they have been reviewing work

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from both the 1st and 2nd quarter. Fractions, Angles, Area Perimeter, both classes have been doing well. In English class, they are learning to outline and do research for their respective Scientist Papers. We have added new students to the classroom, both a 6th grader and a 7th grader. From my class to you Happy New Year and God Bless. *Coach Don and 6th and 7th grades.*

Upcoming events:

January 20 – MLK Day no school
February 12 – Early release day
February 17 – President’s Day no school
March 1 – School Open House

HAPPY NEW YEAR



CHILDCARE



Letters of the month: F, D

Number of the month: 7

Shape of the month: Rectangle

Color of the month: Blue

Bible Lesson: Boy Jesus studies in the Temple

Bible Words : Lord, I love...Your house Psalm 26:8

This month we are learning about – Exploring The Poles

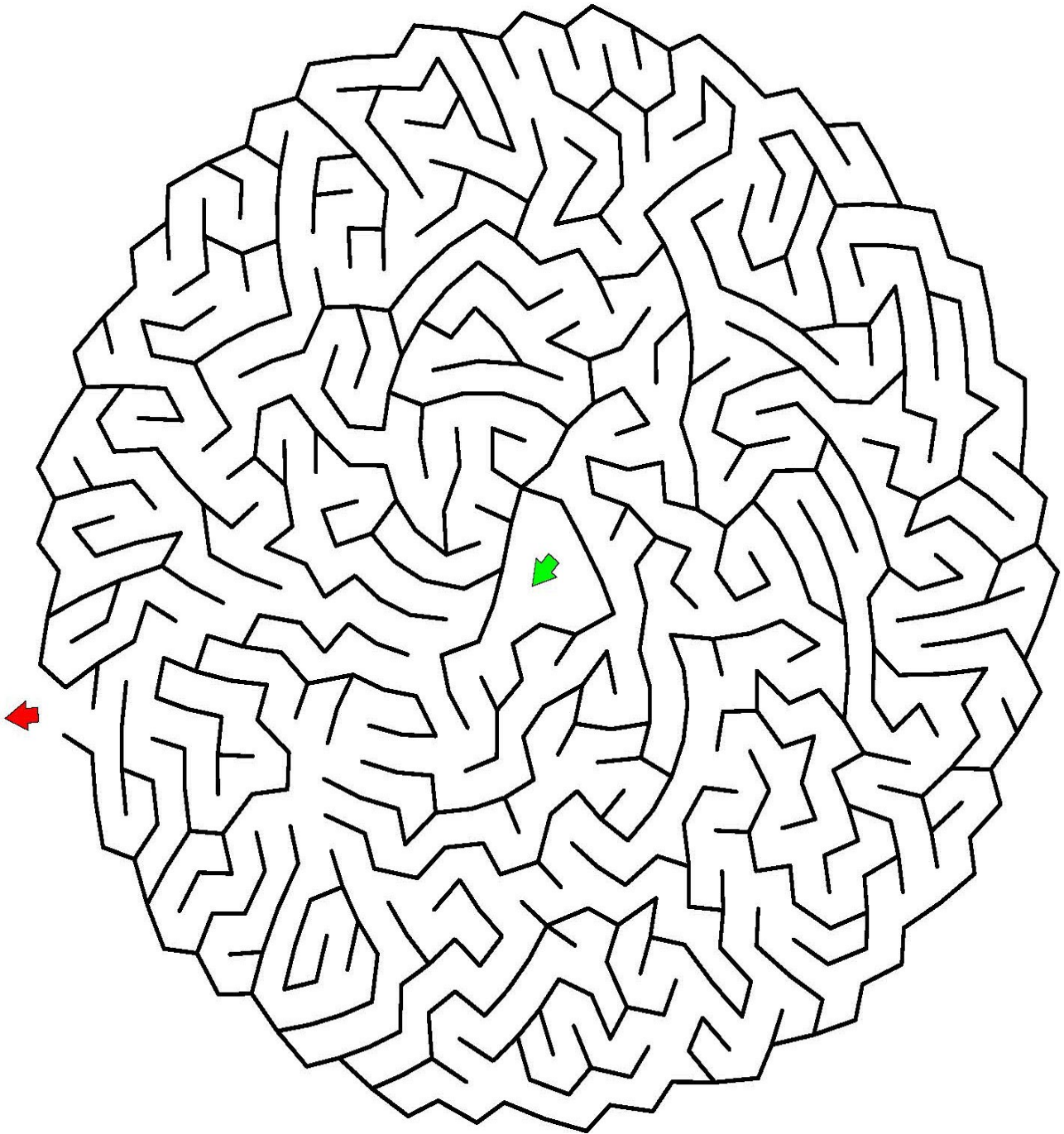
VPK- We are continuing our study of buildings: How they are built, what we build them with and are they homes or businesses.

Letters of the month: L, C, E

We are Closed on January 20th for Martin Luther King Jr Day

MAZE

Can you find your way out of the maze?



Psalm 71:1-16: In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: Let me never be put to confusion.

Prayer

for the New Year

Grant me the strength from day to day
To bear what burdens come my way.
Grant me throughout this bright New Year
More to endure and less to fear.

Help me live that I may be
From spite and petty malice free.

Let me not bitterly complain
When cherished hopes of mine prove vain,
Or spoil with deeds of hate and rage
Some fair tomorrow's spotless page.
Lord as the days shall come and go
In courage let me stronger grow.

Lord as the New Year dawns today
Help me to put my faults away.

Let me be big in little things;
Grant me the joy which friendship brings.

Keep me from selfishness and spite;
Let me be wise in what is right.

A happy New Year! Grant that I
May bring no tear to any eye.

When this New Year in time shall end
Let it be said I've played the friend.

Have lived and loved and labored here,
And made of it a happy year.

Edgar A. Guest

**REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH,
SCHOOL & CHILD CARE**
6970 Mineola Rd.
Englewood, FL 34224

ADDRESS SERVICE
REQUESTED - OPTION 1

January
2025

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REDEEMER REPORTER

Published monthly for members, associate members and visitors of Redeemer Lutheran Church. Redeemer is a member congregation of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. (LCMS).

WORSHIP SERVICES:

Divine Service: 9:15 am

Bible Study: 10:30 am



The Redeemer Lutheran Church, School & Child Care Family are called into the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by His command (Matthew 28:18-20) to:

- ◆ *Disciple all nations, that is, all people;*
- ◆ *Baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;*
- ◆ *Proclaim the Gospel and teach His Word in its truth and purity; and*
- ◆ *Never be ashamed of the Gospel—it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16)*