REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH & PRESCHOOL
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WILLMAR, MN 56201
(320) 235-4685
redeemer@redeemerwillmar.org
www.redeemerwillmar.org

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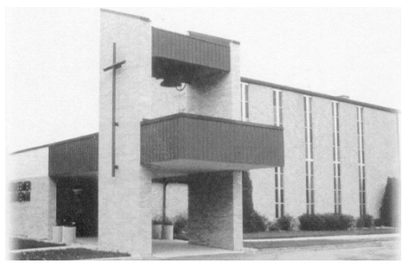
02/20

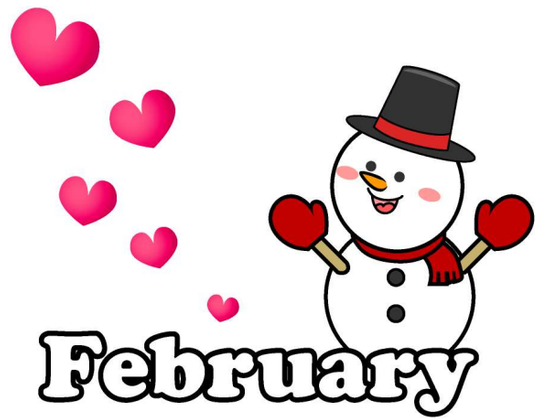
Address Service Requested

Lutheran Church Missouri Synod



Go Disciple All Nations

Sharing Christ, Changing Lives



2020

IN TOUCH WITH REDEEMER

A newsletter by and for the family of Redeemer Lutheran Church

Volume XXX, Issue II

Does it only snow in this part of the country Friday to Saturday?

One of the things I have done is to record church attendance on a spreadsheet. Even though the data is added to every week, I can see some shifts by looking at the numbers from past years. For instance, you can look at the numbers in August and conclude that people take their vacations right before the start of school. When you see a huge explosion in the numbers in the springtime, that is usually the day of Easter that year. The attendance for the months from January to March can also shed some light on attendance. When there is a strong dip in the number of people who were counted, this could be a result of a weekend winter storm.

The first winter here in Minnesota was called a very light winter by normal standards. There was a very small amount of snow and the temperature was not as much in the negative. The numbers that winter are pretty good. Since then; you can really tell just from the number recorded, when we had bad weather. Winter weather can cause an ugly skew in the average; and cause us to react a certain way. Do we have a negative reaction to seeing church attendance decrease?

Where does that reaction lead you? Do we start to make a list of people to blame? Do we look at the bulletin to find out what we can change? Do we try to add more programming to shepherd more people? Will we grow if we build a multiple level slide for kids to enjoy so we can attract more young families? (You laugh but I know a church that did this.) I have heard people say that do not want to differ from any of our traditions, but then complain that the church is not growing.

What about asking a different react and question?

Last month, on a Sunday morning that was a low attendance day, I spoke about how we view our circumstances. One way was to use the abundance of pews per person to sit in a different place (like y'all haven't heard me ask you to sit closer to the front). The main stance I wanted to take that morning was the use of technology. If some do have a "spot" in a particular pew in the church; and that spot is empty on a Sunday morning, how do we view that reaction inside our mind?

Oh…they were not able to be in church this morning…

Are they feeling okay? If there anything in life that is getting in the way of the joy that comes from God? How are they doing? What am I getting to right now…a phone call. There are some in the camp who say that it is up to the church staff or elders to call everyone in the church and take care of the congregation in that manner. In the other camp, are people want to be around others and naturally talk to people face-to-face and over a phone.

As the days in February will probably grow colder and whiter with snow. What will we do with this "opportunity?" Can Lent help us take a 40-day journey to have a healthier congregation?

Pastor Matt

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:3-6

JESUS IS MOST IMPORTANT

In his book, *The Best Is Yet to Come*, John Kieschnick tells the story of Bob Buford. He writes, "Bob Buford owned a cable television company, and God richly blessed his business. Wealth and power, however, didn't fill the hole in Bob's life. He had a nagging sense of emptiness, so he went to a psychiatrist. Bob shared his dilemma, and the psychiatrist told him, 'Bob, I want you to go home and take out a piece of paper and a pen. Draw a box, and in that box write the words that describe the most important thing in your life.'

What do you suppose Bob wrote in His box? What would you write in your box? What is your highest priority in life?

?

Before we put our answers in the box, let's reflect on our thoughts in relation to Bob's emptiness. As Christians, we understand that wealth and power do not fill our emptiness nor give us the security and happiness that Bob was seeking. As our faith grows, we learn that true riches have nothing to do with money. We can have very little money and be very rich or be very wealthy and be impoverished. True riches have to do with a right relationship with Jesus Who, through His death and resurrection, brings us happiness, contentment, joy, love, peace, and life everlasting. Material possessions do not constitute real riches.

Material things are transitory. What we possess materially is subject to loss in a variety of ways. Our wealth can be lost in the stock market or through rust, obsolescence, and thievery. No matter how much money we may have, we have no way of guaranteeing that it can be kept safe and secure. Money can be lost, stolen, or its purchasing power lost through inflation. Investments can decline in value and businesses can fail. Our property can be burned or robbed. All material things can be gone quickly. Even if our material things stay with us, we will eventually leave them, because, at the end, we can take nothing with us.

God had blessed Bob materially, but he was still feeling empty with no purpose. Through faith, we understand that what we need most is a relationship with Jesus Who is the only Person Whose love and forgiveness can give us all that we need. So, in response to the psychiatrist's question as to what is the most important thing in our life, our answer in the box is "Jesus!"

Stewardship Board

SERVING GROUPS

We have monthly serving groups and a list is posted on the church office window. Please check your phone number for accuracy or if you're not on the list and would like to be, contact the church office.

FEBRUARY

Deb Bremseth – 320-231-2089
Sarah Fosso – 320-967-4159

Troy & Lisa Anderson
Deb Bremseth
John & Sharon Cola
Carolyn Davis
Ryan & Sarah Fosso
Jeremy & Nichole Gleason
Sarah Hagen
Keven & Diane Hillenbrand
Jamie Jackson
Randy & Lynn Johnson
Roger & Nancy Klaassen
Ben Kopacek
Brad & Claudia Lenz
Brad Marcus
Gene & Rose Meyer
Randy & Melissa Mord
Nathan & Margart Nielsen
Tim & Stacy Pollock
Charlotte Roduner
Jennifer Schoumaker
Dave & Lynn Sherod
Jeff & LeAnn Stauffenecker
Tony & Kerry Texley

MARCH

Beth Corti – 320-231-1907

Alice Beckmann
Marcia Conklin
Lee & Beth Corti
Kim & Karen Heiden
Robert Hillenbrand
Cortney & Erin Howard
Robin Jacobson
Richard & Donna Johnson
Brandon & Chelsie Kopacek
Jeremy & Andria Krakow
Philip & Michelle Marcus
Dan & Phyllis Monson
Mick & Heather Moyer
Marlin & Cheryl Niss
Tom & Tracy Ost
Todd & Audrey Raap
Robert & Debra Rodelius
Justin & Tanya Rosenau
Brad & Suzanne Skindelien
Gordon & Deloris Steffen
Wilfred Wenberg
Ted Wurm

NOTE: Please remember to contact your co-chair and ask them how you can be of assistance or just to let them know you are available!

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples. Luke 11:1

The Lord's Prayer, it is the prayer that really has all that you need and this month in Confirmation we will be starting lessons on Prayer and the Prayer Jesus taught His, disciples, to use. I always like getting ready for these classes because I spend some time reviewing my past teaching notes, reflecting on my own prayer life and take a look at what society sees as prayer practices.

Prayer is probably one of the hardest things that I teach to students each year. It seems so simple yet when I ask someone to pray at the start or end of class, everyone looks to the floor hoping I won't call on them. Prayer is a really important part of who we are as Christians yet I think we take the power of prayer for granted.

One of the things that we cover when we talk about prayer during confirmation is that prayer is really just a conversation between us and our Heavenly Father, who promises in His timing He will answer our prayers.

The students are right, prayer is hard, and when I reflect on my own prayer practices in front of God I am the student staring at the floor not knowing how to pray. Even I need to brush up on what it means to include prayer in my own life. So what do I do, read more books about prayer; no seriously I am right now. Probably not the most effective solution but I recently started reading "A Praying Life," by Paul E. Miller as a way to help me reflect on my own prayer practices and areas where I can grow, because hate to remind you of this we never stop learning from God's word or growing in our own faith life.

Society has a lot of opinions on prayer. I am a podcast listener and recently I have listened to a few on prayer and have heard people reflect on how casual the use of the phrase "I'll pray for you or you are in my prayers," is used. What do we really mean when we say this phrase? Do we really follow through when we tell someone that we are praying for them? I'll be honest and say that sometimes I don't always follow through because life gets in the way and we forget to include in our daily prayers or we forget to do daily prayers at all. What would it look like if we prayed for that individual on the spot instead of saying you are in my prayers? Yes, you can even do this via text or on Facebook (it may even be easier since you are writing it out). Think of the impact it would mean for the person you are praying for, to have someone pause and pray right there.

I want to challenge you all as the confirmation students and parents start to learn about prayer in the next month to stop and reflect on your own practices this month.

Cassie Drenkow, Director of Christian Education

It is time to celebrate our moms again at preschool. Each year we have Mom's day the week of Valentine's. The children are overjoyed to have their moms come to preschool. We sing some songs, have lunch and usually do a service project together. This year our service project will be to collect items that children need as they enter into emergency foster care. They usually don't get to take anything with them as they move to a new household. We will help out using our chapel offerings, Thrivent action grants, and donations from you-the congregation. Check out the list below and leave items in one of the offices at church by February 10th.

Celebrating moms is especially important as we do this project. Parenting is hard work. Strong faith, families and partnerships can give children a wonderful environment to grow and learn. We are blessed to be one of these partners for a short time.

Rachel Jeppesen
Preschool Director

DONATION ITEMS WANTED:

Teen socks, underwear
Bathroom essentials: shampoo, soap, toothbrush/paste, deodorant, body wash
Hair products: comb/brush, hair bands

Baby Items: diapers, wipes, pull-ups, sippy cups, bottles

Small rolling suitcases- can be gently used.

†† FEBRUARY 2020††

	ELDERS	GREETERS	ACOLYTES	SOUND	LIBRARY
Feb 2 **8:00 AM** **Communion** **10:30 AM**	Dave Runke Jeff Pitt Wayne Dahlke Matt Akerson	Brad & Suzanne Skindelien Gary & Mary Hillenbrand	Jillayna Schroeder Emily Johnson	David Reyes Darrell Hoesktra	LaVonne Van Zee
Feb 9 **8:00 AM** **10:30 AM**	Doug Jorschumb Neil Buboltz	Luther & Peggy Dykema Jerry & Betty Schleh	Christina Spieker Chloe Jensen	Mike Mohr Brad Marcus	Michelle Marcus
Feb 16 **8:00 AM** **Communion** **10:30 AM**	Jeff Pitt Stan Skaro Paul Meyer Dave Danzeisen	Don & Birdie Urban Leon & Carole Schultz	Colton Dahline Matthew Lingbeek	Adam Sandau Art Bolland	Sarah Fosso
Feb 23 **8:00 AM** **10:30 AM**	Dave Runke Brandon Kopacek	Anita Petersen Bill & Deb Paterson Marlin & Cheryl Niss	Ayla Moyer William Jorschumb	Sergio Fernandez Darrell Hoekstra	Lorraine King
Feb 26 **6:00 PM**	Neil Buboltz Matt Akerson		Adam Sandau	Mike Mohr	
USHERS	**8:00 AM**	***Tim Pollock**, Mike Gratz, Jason Kubasch, Mel Schwartz			**(*Head Usher)**
	10:30 AM	***Darrell Hoekstra**, Ken Nash, John Behl			

2020 ELDER – RESPONSIBILITY

Elder	Phone #	Household Names
Dave Danzeisen	**894-2396**	**Akerson – Bokelman**
Brandon Kopacek	**905-0734**	**Bolland – Davis**
Stan Skaro	**599-4506/894-9450**	**Derksen – Grewe**
Steve Lueders	**894-5750**	**Grothe – Jacobson**
Paul Meyer	**651-295-6670**	**Jaspersen – Kruse**
Doug Jorschumb	**235-5451**	**Kubasch – Meyer**
Neil Buboltz	**796-2352**	**Mikkelsen – Pillatzki**
Wayne Dahlke	**262-9847**	**Pitt – Schoumaker**
Dave Runke	**235-9068**	**Schroeder – Streich**
Matt Akerson	**894-4997**	**Stueckrath – Zetah**

Sport-Tek 1/2-Zip Pullover

An extremely flexible layer with a soft-brushed backing and moisture control for year-round comfort.

- 90/10 poly/spandex jersey
- Tag-free label
- Smooth-faced
- Chin guard for additional comfort
- Cadet collar
- Taped neck
- Raglan sleeves
- Open cuffs and hem

CHOOSE A COLOR

- ☐ BLACK
- ☐ NAVY
- ☐ RED
- ☐ MAROON
- ☐ ROYAL
- ☐ CHARCOAL

CHOOSE A SIZE

LADIES	ADULT	PRICE
☐ XS	☐ XS	$35.00
☐ S	☐ S	$35.00
☐ M	☐ M	$35.00
☐ L	☐ L	$35.00
☐ XL	☐ XL	$35.00
☐ 2XL	☐ 2XL	$37.00
☐ 3XL	☐ 3XL	$38.00
☐ 4XL	☐ 4XL	$39.00

TOTAL_____

SAMPLE

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO HANSEN ADVERTISING. PLEASE STAPLE CHECK OR CASH TO ORDER FORM. PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER.
PLEASE TURN ORDER IN ON TIME. WE WILL NOT ACCEPT LATE ORDERS.

GRAND TOTAL $

NAME: _____ **PHONE NUMBER:** _____
PLEASE PRINT

HANSEN ADVERTISING
www.hansenad.com

Thank You!

PLEASE CALL WITH ANY QUESTIONS: 320-235-4754

OFFICE USE ONLY
PAID _____
CHECK NUMBER_____

REDEEMER LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

Enrolling now for Fall
Ages 3 to 5 years old
2 to 5 days per week
Half or Full Day

Accredited, Christian Curriculum
4 Star Parent Aware
Eligible for Scholarships

Registration forms are on the welcome counter or on the website at:
www.redeemerlutheranpreschool.org

THE ALTAR GUILD WILL MEET THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH AT 5:30 PM.

SIGN UP ON OFFICE WINDOW TO SERVE LENTEN MEALS AT 12:45 OR 6:30 PM.

2019 YEAR-END GIVING STATEMENTS are in your mailbox. If you have any questions, contact Chris in the church office.

THE QUILTERS ARE IN NEED of **old sheets and blankets** for fillers in the Orphan Grain Train quilts. Please bring your donation to the church office. They meet Mondays at 12:30 pm.

LEAP OUT OF THE WINTER BLUES and bring the whole family for a fun night of Cabin Fever Bingo on February 28th from 6:30-8:30 pm. There will be snacks and fun prizes for all ages. So, escape the Winter blues and join us for an evening of fellowship and fun! Supper is at 6:00 and Bingo starts at 6:30.

DONATIONS REQUESTED FOR BINGO NIGHT Did you clean out any closets during January's bad weather? Did you find a gift card that you could pass along? The Board of Education is looking for items of various values and age ranges that could be used as prizes for Bingo Night on February 28th. You can drop the items off at the office. See Kim Canion or Cassie Drenkow for questions. Thank you in advance for your treasures!

ORDER YOUR GIFT CARDS THROUGH SCRIP! Forms can be found in the wooden rack in the narthex or the church office and are due on Monday, February 10th.

SUPPORT OUR TROOPS!! For **FEBRUARY** we will be collecting "Hygiene Products" for our troops. Eye Drops, Lip Balm, Saline Nasal Spray, Disposable Razors, Foot Powder, Multi-Vitamins, Vitamin C, Toothbrushes, Toothpaste, & Sunglasses. Please place donated items in box located in the narthex.

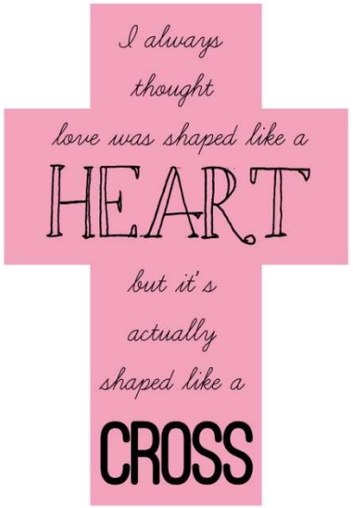
HOME VISITS Pastor Matt would like to continue to visit with members in their homes. Sometimes scheduling is difficult to plan ahead. If you would like him to call before stopping by, please let the office know.

HOPE FOR OUR CITY BIRTHDAY BAG SERVICE PROJECT

This Sunday School year we will be collecting items all year long. Each month will have a specific item to place in the box. The drop off box will be located outside the Fellowship Hall.

February – Cake Mix & one can of pop

March – Candles
April – Decorations (Streamers, Banners and Hats)
May – Spaghetti Noodles and Spaghetti Sauce



Valentine's Day Word Scramble

DIRECTIONS: Unscramble the letters to form the names of 11 different Valentine's Day words. Then unscramble the shaded letters to answer the riddle.

LIRANGD

HAETR

OLCHAOTEC

DICPU

MOEP

LSWROFE

BOLEDEV

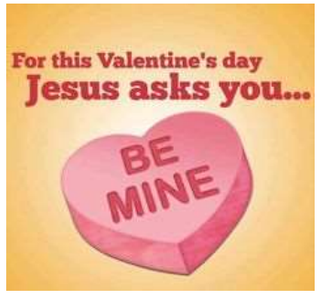
ANDCY

ORSSE

EOEVNPLE

RRABYUFE

What did the boy bear say to the girl bear on Valentine's Day?



We must grow in love and to do this we must go on loving and loving and giving and giving until it hurts – the way Jesus did.

REDEEMER CASUAL WEAR is now available to the congregation. Order forms are available in the narthex or church office and can be turned in to Rachel Jeppesen or the church office with payment. You may also order online on Redeemer's website. Check out the many different colors and sizes. **All orders are due February 10th.**

Redeemer Order Form

District Very Important Tee

Crafted from ring spun cotton for ultimate comfort.

- 50/50 combed ring spun cotton/poly
- Slightly slimmer body and shorter sleeves
- 1x1 rib knit neck
- Tear-away label
- Shoulder to shoulder taping

CHOOSE A COLOR
- ☐ HEATHER ROYAL
- ☐ HEATHER NAVY
- ☐ HEATHER RED
- ☐ HEATHER CHARCOAL
- ☐ HEATHER KELLY GREEN
- ☐ PINK FROST (YOUTH ONLY)

CHOOSE A SIZE

ADULT	LADIES	YOUTH	PRICE
☐ XS	☐ XS	☐ XS	$10.00
☐ S	☐ S	☐ S	$10.00
☐ M	☐ M	☐ M	$10.00
☐ L	☐ L	☐ L	$10.00
☐ XL	☐ XL		$12.00
☐ 2XL	☐ 2XL		$13.00
☐ 3XL	☐ 3XL		$14.00
☐ 4XL	☐ 4XL		$15.00

TOTAL_____

Port & Company Hooded Sweatshirt

- 8.5-ounce, 80/20 ring spun cotton/poly
- 100% ring spun cotton face
- Removable tag for comfort and relabeling
- Locker patch
- Twill-taped neck
- Ideal for direct to garment (DTG) printing

SAMPLE

CHOOSE A COLOR
- ☐ KELLY GREEN
- ☐ RED
- ☐ BLACK
- ☐ ORANGE
- ☐ ROYAL
- ☐ NAVY
- ☐ PURPLE

CHOOSE A SIZE

ADULT	PRICE
☐ XS	$25.00
☐ S	$25.00
☐ M	$25.00
☐ L	$25.00
☐ XL	$25.00
☐ 2XL	$27.00
☐ 3XL	$28.00
☐ 4XL	$29.00

TOTAL_____

District Ladies Lightweight Hoodie

- 6.5-ounce, 55/45 combed ring spun cotton/poly fleece
- Cowl neck converts to hood
- Dyed-to-match drawcords
- Coverstitch details
- Back neck tape
- Slightly longer length
- 2x2 rib knit cuffs and hem

CHOOSE A COLOR
- ☐ HEATHER BLACK
- ☐ HEATHER PINK
- ☐ HEATHER NAVY

CHOOSE A SIZE

ADULT	PRICE
☐ XS	$30.00
☐ S	$30.00
☐ M	$30.00
☐ L	$30.00
☐ XL	$30.00
☐ 2XL	$32.00
☐ 3XL	$33.00
☐ 4XL	$34.00

TOTAL_____

Port & Company Youth Hoodie

- 8.5-ounce, 80/20 ring spun cotton/poly
- 50/50 ring spun cotton/poly (Dark Heather Grey)
- 100% ring spun cotton face
- Removable tag for comfort and relabeling
- Locker patch
- Twill-taped neck
- No drawcord at hood
- Front pouch pocket

CHOOSE A COLOR
- ☐ BLACK
- ☐ RED
- ☐ ROYAL
- ☐ NAVY
- ☐ DARK HEATHER GREY

CHOOSE A SIZE

YOUTH	PRICE
☐ XS	$25.00
☐ S	$25.00
☐ M	$25.00
☐ L	$25.00
☐ XL	$25.00

TOTAL_____

SKATIN' PLACE 6th-8th grade Youth, don't forget to sign up for the Skatin' Place WAC event February 7th from 5:30-11:00 pm. Cost for Redeemer Youth and friends is $20 per student (with a discount for Redeemer Youth of $10). Payment and permission slip should be turned in to the church office prior to the event. Deadline to sign-up is Wednesday, February 5th.

SKI/TUBE TRIP is February 16th from 11:30 am – 9 pm. Redeemer will cover the cost of lift tickets and families are responsible for any rental equipment (paid prior to the trip). Sign-up on Youth page on church website by February 12th.

REDEEMER PARENTS! Check out this opportunity just for you. Starting February 23 Intentional Parenting 6-week Bible Study. To be an exceptional parent, you need to be an intentional parent. It's never too late to become an intentional parent. Remember, you are the GREATEST INFLUENCE on the life of your child (no matter their age)! And it can all begin with these resources. Sign-up online or outside the office door.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS MEETING will be held on Sunday, February 23rd from 11:30-12:30 pm with lunch provided. We will be going over the Crosses of Lent project that will be taking place during Sunday School hour on March 1st and throughout the season of Lent on Wednesday evenings.

VBS PLANNING COMMITTEE – March 1st following the 10:30 am service. If you are interested in being a part of the planning committee for 2020 Focus VBS, please plan on attending the meeting. We will be sharing this year's theme along with talking about events going on throughout the week.

MYSTERY MOVIE Redeemer students in 3rd-5th grade are invited to join the other Willmar area churches for a Mystery Movie hosted here at Redeemer on Sunday, March 8th from 3:30-7:00 pm. Watch for clues each week during the month of February and try to guess what Mystery Movie we will be watching. There will also be a meal and games as well. FIRST CLUE - You might want to bring a flashlight because this mystery movie happens at night.

Sunday	Attend	Comm	Adults	Sr. High	S. S.	Online	Private
Jan 5	215	193	21	1	27	101	
Jan 12	209		32	5	27	104	
Jan 19	149	127	23	2	13	103	
Jan 26	217		Voter's	6	23	70	
TOTALS	790	320	76	14	90	378	18

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN!!

Redeemer Lutheran Church & Preschool are hosting a neighborhood EGG HUNT for our members and neighbors across the street. HOW CAN YOU HELP??? We need:

Plastic eggs
Candy
Volunteers to stuff eggs after Lenten services
Volunteers to hide eggs the morning of
Volunteers to greet and hand out bags during the event
Volunteers to clean up and collect empty eggs after the event

It's never too early to start donating and thinking about volunteering! This event was such a success last year! We had nearly 200 KIDS and stuffed almost 4,000 EGGS!! Without the help of our amazing members and volunteers, we would have never been able to do it!! We can't wait to do it all again this year!!

VALENTINE'S DAY WORD SEARCH

Find and circle all 15 words.

X	P	I	N	K	N	H	S	N	U	O	T	G	N	L	T
E	O	I	G	Y	T	E	E	Y	V	N	C	C	U	I	C
G	E	N	I	T	N	E	L	A	V	U	E	O	E	H	G
N	M	F	F	O	N	B	T	O	R	D	R	R	O	F	K
E	Y	N	T	P	M	S	E	C	K	T	X	C	R	N	S
V	E	N	S	P	N	M	U	O	E	M	O	E	S	M	R
O	O	X	K	S	N	P	W	C	O	L	I	R	O	S	E
L	A	E	A	B	I	D	N	U	A	D	C	S	N	E	W
I	C	A	R	D	T	K	U	T	K	N	Y	T	E	F	O
E	N	E	U	Z	A	I	E	H	U	N	D	Z	H	U	L
M	V	B	L	E	M	N	O	L	G	M	V	Y	O	N	F
K	S	W	E	E	T	H	E	A	R	T	A	F	S	I	R

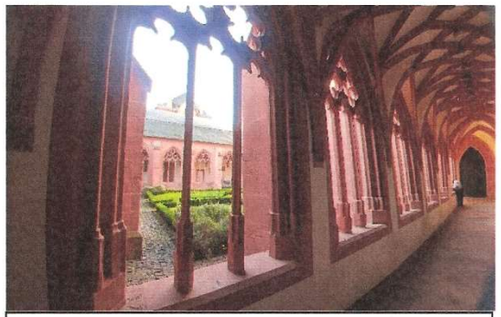
1: HEART
2. CUPID
3. CARD
4. VALENTINE
5. LOVE
6: POEM
7. CHOCOLATE
8. CANDY
9. KISS
10. ROSE
11: FLOWERS
12. PINK
13. SWEETHEART
14. GIFT
15. HUG

Seminarian Berett Steffen

January, 2020

These past months...

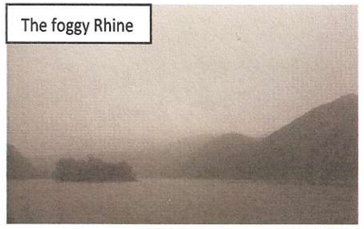
...have been busy, but rewarding. Classes have been going well, although my loose grasp of the language sometimes makes it difficult to understand what's being talked about. This is discouraging, more often than not, but I have to remind myself that my German skills have greatly improved since I got here (even though I'm impatient and would like them to improve faster). I even managed to write, in German, a short paper summarizing the main ideas of a few articles of the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, so I really shouldn't complain.



The St. Stephanskirche in Mainz, 13th-14th century.

Carryn and I have done quite a bit of travelling already. Thanks to Dr. Kolb (a long-time member of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), we've gotten to see much of Mainz and the area around it. Mainz is a beautiful city with a rich history, especially regarding the numerous ancient Roman constructions that are scattered throughout it.

We also were taken on a trip with Dr. Kolb up the Rhine to see some of the small towns on its banks and to experience their history. This was exactly the kind of trip I enjoy most; the tourist season was long over and the towns we visited were quiet. The fog cascaded down the low mountains and hovered over the river in the chill air, so that you could just barely make out the famous vineyards of Rhineland-Pfalz.

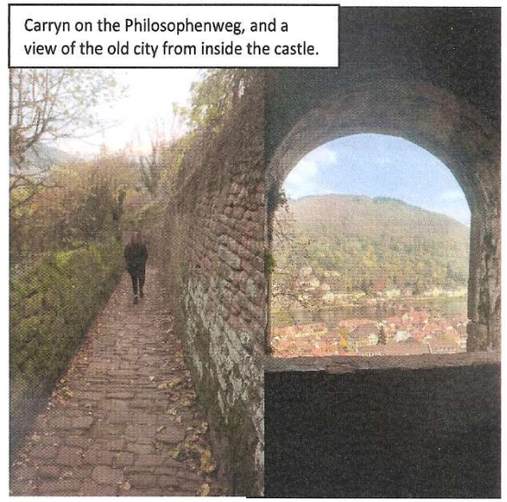


The foggy Rhine

Carryn and I, our friend Christian, and Dr. Kolb on our Rhine adventure.

The food in this region was delicious, as was, obviously, the wine. We saw several beautiful old churches and wandered the empty streets admiring the old architecture of towns such as Bacharach, Oberwesel, and Sankt Goar for hours before heading home.

We also visited Heidelberg, which to date has been our favorite trip. The old city slopes down the steep wooded hills on both sides of the Neckar River. The castle is ancient and crumbling, but still beautiful, and the views are stunning. We walked the Philosophenweg (philosopher's way) and visited the



Carryn on the Philosophenweg, and a view of the old city from inside the castle.

city's cathedrals, but the landscape is what stays with me most.

Our most recent trip was to Munich (or "München," if you're a German) over New Year's. This well-known city is a 5-hour train ride from Frankfurt and has many gardens and parks, old historic monuments, as well as a large palace. It also boasts the world-famous Hofbrauhaus, the biggest Oktoberfest destination in Germany. Naturally, I had to go and yes, their beer is delicious.

One of many Gothic structures in Munich

The old part of Munich is quite large, and Carryn and I spent quite a bit of time exploring it. As usual, the architecture was what captivated me the most. Large Gothic structures were the order of the day, which made me very happy. But the New Year's fireworks were my favorite part by far. Munich has no "official" firework show; instead, the people buy their own from any number of fireworks shops, and even from Lidl and Aldi. Fireworks here are dirt cheap (I saw a pack of 10 large rockets for 8 Euros and large cubes of mortars for as little as 10), so *everyone* buys them. Some people even go so far as to buy Polish fireworks, which, I've been told, are much less . . . regulated (aka., more fun). Even before midnight, there were fireworks going off all over the city. But when midnight struck, Munich became a warzone. The booming was nonstop, and the sky lit up with an absolutely absurd number of fireworks. The smoke from the explosions was so thick that the tops of the cathedrals were no longer visible. Ash rained from the sky. Misfired rockets glanced off the side of buildings. From our vantage point on the King Ludwig bridge over the Isar River, we could see it all. Even when we got cold and decided to walk home 20 minutes later, the fireworks had not abated, and even though we walked for an hour back to our hotel, the smoke was still just as thick. I'll never forget it.

Carryn and I enjoying the fireworks

Classes will start again soon, which is good, because I've had far too much free time. Back to studying the Confessions and the Old Testament!

Our next major trip will come at the end of January, when we will be attending a Lutheran conference in Oslo, Norway. More to come!