## REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH LCMS



FEBRUARY 2019 PUBLICATION VOLUME 12 ISSUE 2

# Redeemer **Reflection** Newsletter

# Loving People To Christ

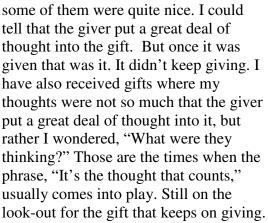
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# REDEEMER REFLECTION

### THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON...

by Pastor Michael Geml

The gift that keeps on giving. I don't recall ever receiving such a gift. It sounds good, but what is this elusive gift that keeps giving? I have received many gifts over the years, and



Some of us have received gifts that were perfect; perfect for someone else. That red sweater with the adorable, smiling kitten on the front with the matching slippers with kitty whiskers. "This would be perfect for Aunt Clara. She'll love it!" The gift that was given has been re-gifted. Maybe that is the key to the search for the gift that keeps on giving. It is something we, ourselves, have already received.



As God's children, we are all called to be re-gifters. When the forgiveness of God came to us, it was the best expression of the phrase, "It's the thought that counts." Jesus thought of you when He gave His life for you. Jesus said, "Freely you have received; freely

give" (Matt. 10).

When I re-gift something like a sweater or a Ch,Ch,Ch, Chia pet, I have rid myself of something for which I have no use. The miracle of the life of faith is when I re-gift the Savior, when I share His love with someone else, I still possess the gift I am giving away. The gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation are for all people, and we, the Church, are to be the world's best and most generous re-gifters. Jesus, the gift that truly keeps on giving.

God's grace, mercy and peace be with all of His re-gifters. ∼ Pastor



- 1 -



James Taylor	02/04
David Lathrop	02/06
Katherine McFarland	02/06
Cheryl Mack	02/08
Mikayla Richardson	02/08
Lilia Bahr	02/10
Karen Balcom	02/13
Amanda Kapp	02/17
Bethany Richardson	02/18
Ben Burmeister	02/20
Brian Fall	02/20
Linda Tschabrun	02/20
Emily Byrd	02/26
Barb Knueppel	02/29

#### TOPIC FOR MARCH

The topic for March is *Signpost*. Are our lives a signpost that points others to the Way? Do we stand as a true marker or signpost for godly direction in this life? The *Reflection* is meant to help reflect our Lord in the daily life and actions of His people, particularly through our activities and worship services here at Redeemer. What can you share that will show God working in your life or reflect Him in those around you?

Please consider sharing these in an article for this newsletter. Invite our people to be part of an experience that reveals our Lord actively at work in our world today.

Send articles or information to bennitt49@yahoo.com, by the 15th of each month, to be included in the

following month's newsletter. Articles on the topics of Family, Prayer, and Outreach are always welcome and accepted for publication each month.

#### THE BEST GIFT

by Peggy Bennitt

Isn't gift giving amazingly exciting? Wondering if the recipient will like it, and if the gift will make them happy? That anticipation adds even more excitement to the gift...especially for the giver. So much is lost to those who focus only on what they can get. They miss out on the joy and excitement of giving. Buying gifts, finding just the right thing for an exceptional somebody, the joy and satisfaction of the gift opening when you chose something especially for that one special person. What a high to share in the glow when the perfect gift you chose is appreciated and valued by someone else.

Imagine the joy of our Heavenly Father when we experience the thrill of knowing Jesus, His Son, whom He gifted to us! All of us! Christ, in turn, is the Giver of our greatest gift...the gift of salvation! The Giver of Life so enjoys giving to His children. Think of the anticipation our Father must feel as He awaits us in heaven. His gift of eternity



is just waiting for us to enter and experience His gift of home and eternity with Him. I can hardly wait to receive His gift of life eternal, and I can only imagine His keen anticipation as we each near the time when His everlasting gift will be ours; when He says, "Receive my gift, welcome home."



Sunday, February 3: BUILDERS
Family building time; reserve for the future the first Sunday of each month,
3:30—6:00 p.m., with a meal included.
This is for all who desire more "tools" for "doing family" the way God intends.

# Sunday, February 10: YOUTH GROUP

Fun, food, and faith-building in the RAC the second Sunday of each month; reserve the dates for the future. **5:30—7:00 p.m.** 

Thursday, February 14: LWML/Women of Redeemer will meet in the Church library at 10:00 a.m. All women of Redeemer are welcome to attend.

Upwards Basketball Practices in the RAC in February are: 4, 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, and 26 from 6:00—8:00 p.m. AND Thursdays, February 7, 14, 21, and 28 from 5:00—6:00 p.m.

February Thursdays, 7:00 p.m. *Joining Jesus* Bible study ongoing: Study is facilitated by Craig Britton.

### THE PERFECT GIFT

by Kimber Walsh

As is common practice, prior to our wedding, women in our families and churches gathered to shower Chris and I with items needed to set up our home. We were tremendously blessed with so many items from towels to flatware to linens to kitchen gadgets that do anything you could think of. We got a waffle iron and camping gear, luggage and a cooler, a laundry hamper and new bedding. We were in awe at the generosity of so many. We appreciated each item so much as it was a huge help stocking our home with necessities.

As I was opening the cards after I arrived home from my shower, one envelope contained an unexpected gift. It was from an older woman at church that I didn't know that well as it was rare that she could sneak away from her homebound husband's side.

The gift was a piece of paper printed



from the computer, cut on the edge with crinkle scissors and pasted to a small piece of bright yellow paper. There was one flower sticker in the corner and a magnet stuck to the back. It was a small two by three inch handmade, somewhat flimsy sign that said, "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above vourselves. Romans 12:10" It was unexpected, but a gift that I treasured dearly, not because it was expensive or fancy, but because this sister in Christ wanted us to have the gift of God's Word for our marriage. She couldn't afford to give much, but I'm especially thankful that she knew she couldn't afford to not share God's Word with us as I'm sure she learned from many years at the Lord's feet and at her husband's side. She could have just as easily not given us anything and I wouldn't have noticed at all. But she took the time to create a gift that would live on the fridge in the heart of our home which would keep in front of our eyes daily God's Word; something we all so desperately need.

I think of her gift often because I love to give gifts. I spend much time finding gifts people in my life will love as special occasions approach. But the gift this sweet sister gave me, the gift of God's Word for my marriage and my life, reminds me that I need not get caught up in gifting the things of this world. I need only remember what she taught me through a simple yellow paper magnet, God's Word is the perfect gift; it's a life-giving gift.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17



### CARRYING SORROW AND FINDING JOY FEBRUARY 18, 2018

by Kristin Rathje, guest writer, with selections and/or excerpts from her Blog, *Next Chapter*; used with permission.

Brené Brown in *Braving the Wilderness* says we "can lean into pure joy without denying the struggle in the world." My husband says, "two realities can coexist." In other words, a person can simultaneously be devastated by a school shooting and cheer loudly at a basketball game. We can hold two things at the same time.

This is hard for me to wrap my mind around. If I am really hurt, I want

to really be sad. I want to grieve, mourn, and wail. I want to go allout Old Testament and rend my garments, put on sackcloth, smear my face with ashes. I



want to fully commit to my feelings. I remember a time in junior high when I felt betrayed by a friend. I ran through the front door of my house, flew up the stairs to my bedroom, flung myself on my bed and wailed—audibly wailed. My mother came into my room, heard my tale of woe, rubbed my back, and commiserated with me. She tried to get me to shake it off and laugh a little, I'm sure, but I would have nothing of that. I needed time and space for my grieving.

Of course as is true of most middle school devastations, my grief was shortlived. In fact, in the words of my great grandmother, "everything looked better in the morning." I likely laughed with my friends at the bus stop the next day. However, life doesn't stay as simple as middle school. Some devastations don't right themselves overnight. Some griefs have staying power. I am thinking of the families of...school shooting victims, for example. They will carry grief with them for the rest of their lives. I'm thinking of sexual assault survivors, too. That kind of devastation does not go away when the sun rises. And, I'm thinking of the kind of aches that many of us carry with us every day—the pain of childhood abuse, the darkness of abject poverty, the burden of overwhelming debt, the brokenness of divorce, and the cumulative scars from years of neglect and unintentional hurts.

What do we do with that kind of grief? How do we simultaneously hold that kind of pain and still find moments of joy?

Years ago we were very close with a family that had suffered great loss. The mother and father had had four children—their oldest child was killed in a motorcycle accident... and their youngest child died in an early-morning car accident... We met this family years after these devastating losses, and I can remember listening in stunned shock to the recounting of the stories. I felt the ache of our friends' loss, yet I also noticed, as we spent more time with them, that the members of this family were often initiators of celebration, of gathering, of laughter...

The family embraced and even cultivated moments of joy, yet certainly they still carried the sorrow of loss. Ann Voskamp says, "There isn't one of us not bearing the wounds from our own bloody battles." It's true. I forget that sometimes, especially when I am walking around in figurative sackcloth and ashes. I look at the people around me and I think, "Look at that perfect life. Certainly they are not suffering." But everyone carries pain. Everyone. We don't often see one another's brokenness because we like to keep it under the thin veneer of Facebook profile pictures, Instagram images, and the other public faces and masks that we wear.



That's not necessarily a bad thing. I mean, pain can be paralyzing. Some losses seem so devastating that we are tempted to lose hope. We are tempted to stay on our beds wailing at the top of our lungs. Most of us don't. Usually we find the wherewithal to wash our face, comb our hair, and get back to the business of life—work, school, groceries, and laundry. However, not all of us find a way like my friends have, to simultaneously hold sorrow and experience joy—the joy of a birthday party, of a new baby, of a basketball win.

Even if we do find a way to be happy for a season, old scars can break open like fresh wounds and your unspoken broken can start to rip you wide open and maybe the essence of all the questions is: how in the holy name of God do you live with your one broken heart? How indeed?

I'm not entirely sure. I have my own unspoken broken and the only remedy I've found is a moment by moment lifting of it. It's as though I'm a small child and I've just fallen with my most prized treasure in my hand. It has been



marred beyond recognition and I am inconsolable. I cry. I weep. I wail. And then, in exhaustion, I hold it up as high as I can as though to say, "See? Do you

see what happened? Can you fix it? Can you make it better?"

When I was a little girl, I would hold broken items up to my dad. He was over six feet tall and very calm. He didn't react in anger or disappointment when something was broken. He quietly took it from my hands and said, "Well, let's see." I knew if it could be fixed, my dad would find a way. He would bring the situation in close, examine it thoroughly, and determine if indeed the item could be restored...And usually, after a few moments, he would hand back my treasure and ask, "how's that?"

I can still feel wonder at my dad's ability to make things whole again. But, as we've all learned, some broken things cannot be made whole. And so I'm standing here holding my unspoken broken in my hand. I'm reaching up as high as I can and I'm saying, "Do you see this? Can you fix it?" And in the moments that I calm my desperate cries, I can almost hear a still small voice:

Behold, I am making all things new. I cup my hand around my ear and listen:

Sorrow may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

"But what about right now?" I yell. *Fear not, I am with you.* 

Yes. Yes, You are. You have never left me nor forsaken me. I'm sitting here trying to be strong and courageous because You are with me wherever I go, but this is a pretty dark and miserable place, you know?

I know. I see. I'm here.

And for that reason, today I will try to cultivate some joy.



### CHRISTIAN CARE MINISTRY

by Nyla Arvy

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord, you labor not in vain.

#### I Corinthians 15:58

Are you looking for suggestions for something useful to do during these cold winter months? Always remember that there is room for random acts of kindness to others at very little cost.

May I suggest you brighten someone's

day by sending a greeting card or valentine card to someone on our church roster? Remember the times when you gathered the daily mail from your mailbox and you discovered a handwritten card amongst the envelopes? Can you recall the joy at seeing the card addressed to you and the anticipation of reading the contents? Why not make someone's day by sending a card. The Redeemer roster is available at the information station or by asking for one in the church office. My challenge to you is to randomly pick a family from the list, even if you don't know them, and let them know who you are and that you care about them!

Lenten Meager Meals will begin on Wednesday, March 13 and will be

offered to everyone prior to the Lenten services through April 10. The meals consist simply of soup and



bread/crackers and are donated by members. A sign-up sheet will appear in the narthex very soon for your opportunity to do this random act of kindness for Redeemer families. Please keep in mind that those who sign up should arrive in the kitchen



approximately 30 minutes prior to serving to organize and set up the area. In general, those who attend always help with cleanup.

March 31 is a fifth Sunday, so plan to take part in

the potluck lunch and socialize with members that attend the opposite Sunday service and catch up on their news. We ask for some volunteers to set up tables and chairs a few days before that date, volunteers to put out the food the day of, and there is always a need for help to clean up and put things away. Thank you in advance!

### **FAMILY FAITH LIFE**

by Kimber Walsh, Director of Family Life Education, CFLE, Redeemer Lutheran Church



We don't really celebrate Valentine's Day at our house. At least we don't celebrate the ways other people do. We skip the big gestures, sappy cards, date nights, and gifts, and wait [impatiently] for the day or two after Valentine's Day when all the candy goes on discount. Then we buy a couple of our favorites and enjoy our sweet treats and the money saved! No matter how you celebrate, think about adding God into your conversations as you do.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the way, when you lie down and when you get up."

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

<u>Conversation Hearts</u>—These timeless valentine treats bear messages

of "UR GR8" and "BE MINE," but what do they really *say*? Something along the lines of "have a sweet treat on me" or "I was thinking of you," either of which can be great encouragements. Discuss how the encouragements of people around you brighten your days. As a family, decide who can use some godly encouragement and how you can deliver it—write a note, make a visit, share a Bible verse, give a hug, and love others with the love of God.

Who is St. Valentine?—St.

Valentine was a priest in the 200s who performed secret marriage ceremonies for Christian couples because the government had an edict forbidding men to marry. [They were in a time of war and wanted their soldiers to be unwed as they were thought to be better fighters.]

St. Augustine wanted to promote the Biblical understanding of marriage between one man and one woman, which was not common in the culture of the time. Talk about God's design for marriage.

Box of Chocolates—If you love surprises, boxes of chocolate are for you. If you don't love surprises or if you are a picky chocolatier, you'd likely prefer something else. If your family is enjoying some "unknown" chocolates this year, take turns guessing what flavor you will get. How does what we see on the outside give us hints about what's on the inside of each piece? How does what we see on the outside of people give us hints about what's on the inside? How can we be sure our outsides—how we live each day and the things other people see about us—show that God is living in us and at work in us?

Valentine Box—Do your kids get to decorate a valentine box? Do they labor over the details of the box that will hold all of their notes from classmates?

Is this too girly? Is this cool enough? Will I get a valentine from everyone? Will I get a valentine from anyone? As your kids decorate or verbalize these things, talk about how God made each of us and knit us together in our mothers' wombs to make us just right. How does making your box just like you want it, remind you of how God made you just like He wants you? List details you are thankful that God gave you and others in your family. (I'm thankful for eyebrows because I think they frame our eyes just right!)

Hugs & Kisses—Hugs and kisses are ways that we show affection. When appropriately used, they can give people a feeling of being surrounded in love. Talk about what makes each of you feel most loved—words of encouragement, when people do nice things for you, when others give you a hug, when someone gives you a little gift, or when they simply spend time doing something fun with you. How can we make sure our family members feel loved by us AND by God in those ways?

Conversation hearts might have conversation in their name, but they don't have to be the only conversation in your Valentine's Day fun. Conversations about faith as you celebrate can add to the fun too!







Builders is our monthly family life time—covering various topics and doing various activities that will build up your family and build up the body of Christ. Families are couples with children, single parents, parents with teens, couples without kids or grown kids, single individuals, grandparents with grandkids. When we say family, we're talking about you and your situation!

We will meet the first Sunday of February, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3:30-6:00 pm. This month's topic: Be Careful Little Eyes What You See: Safeguarding Your Home and Technology from Pornography and Harmful Content. Come get tools for your technology and your conversations to make your home a safe space for consuming online content. RSVP on the sign-up sheet in the narthex so plans can be made for childcare and dinner.

Questions? Contact Kimber Walsh at <a href="mailto:kimberwalsh@comcast.net">kimberwalsh@comcast.net</a> or 517-750-3100.

**Our Prodigals** 

All of us have someone in our lives who has strayed from faith in Jesus Christ. How can we reach out not only to the prodigal, but to the parents, families, and friends of prodigals who struggle to know what to do? Join us for a retreat on these important issues and an

introduction to a ministry opportunity that churches everywhere can easily implement. Save the date for this Faith Family Reunion Retreat with Paula Isakson (daughter of Rev. Dr. Jakob Heckert) Saturday, June 29, 9:00 a.m.-



3:00 p.m.

Visit faithfamilyreunion.com/Redeemer-Lutheran-Church for more information. Cost will be \$10.00 and will include lunch.



Are you looking for additional resources to talk to your kids about faith? JellyTelly has free devotions, activities, and information for parents to encourage you as you walk through pointing your kids to Christ in all aspects of your life. Check out the resources by visiting jellytelly.com/blog

\*Each month "Relevant Resources" will feature a different resource that may be relevant to you. If you have a topic request, please email <a href="mailto:kimberwalsh@comcast.net">kimberwalsh@comcast.net</a>.

### WHAT DID YOU GET?

by Craig Britton

Back in those old days, you know—those school days that seem such a distant memory—I recall hearing the above question repeatedly as school reconvened following the Christmas holidays. "What did you get?" And in earliest days, "What did Santa bring?" Gifts have always been a large part of the Christmas observance in our culture. Generations ago, the gift exchange was truly prompted by the Biblical accounts of the Magi bringing gifts to the Christ



Child and that Holy Child as the Supreme Gift to all the world from a reconciling Heavenly Father. Today? Not so much.

The exchange of gifts today is ruled by immense access to a myriad of choices of nearly every potential gift idea, the consumerist "one upmanship" of trying to outdo other gift-givers, and the non-stop marketing of Christmas from even the days preceding the jack-olanterns, ghosts, and ghouls of Halloween.

Gift-giving is a wonderful practice. Any time. But coming out of the holiday season as we are, I want to help us look at one gift in particular. In Luke's marvelous gospel, Jesus has just given the disciples "His" prayer (11:2-4) and follows that with various instruction and encouragement. Jesus turns to

addressing the giving nature of our Heavenly Father by saying, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (11:13).



Gifts? Children? The Holy Spirit? Sounds like good thing. No ... a great thing. Jesus is saying to us that He acknowledges that we can give good gifts to our children. And then in a contrasting statement, He lifts our sights to a Greater Giver and a Greater Gift.

I hope you are intrigued as I am when Jesus clearly calls us to ask for His Spirit. Were we not given the Holy Spirit at our baptism? Does the Lord not teach us that the Holy Spirit abides with those who are His? The answer to that question is a resounding yes, but what Jesus is saying is, "Ask the Father to move your heart and mind into readiness for all the Holy Spirit brings to you." One of my daily practices is to read daily prayers from a wonderful book titled Starck's Prayer Book (CPH, 2009), and I cannot recommend this wonderful little volume too highly. Johann Starck was a Lutheran pastor in the 18th century, a contemporary of J.S. Bach, and one who handled many challenges as a shepherd of God's sheep. He writes the following in his exhortation to Friday midday prayer:

"There is no more necessary and blessed petition than to ask for the Holy Spirit. In this present life we need a guide, a teacher, a comforter. All this the Holy Spirit is!"

And a bit later,

"Everyone should pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, whether old or young, great or small. Parents should ask for this gift for themselves and their children, since the Holy Spirit is a guarantee of our inheritance."



What would Redeemer look like if, in 2019, each one of us regularly called out to the Lord for the gift of His Spirit? What would the tenor of our homes be if parents called out to the Lord each morning that each of their children would be filled and fueled by the Spirit of the Lord? I'm going to say it. The difference would be immeasurable. The ugly and strange truth is that Redeemer, like most other congregations, does a whole lot of what we do on our own strength.

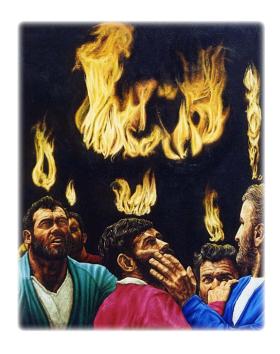
Craig! Are you saying our people don't pray? Are you claiming the Holy Spirit is not at work on Spring Arbor Road? Well, the quick answer, of course, is, "No, that is not what I am saying." But just as quickly, I would add this: Let's do a deep heart check and let's ask ourselves, "What did I do today where I functioned in my usual mode and finished my day without truly depending on the Holy Spirit? What expectation did I have today to see a true work of the

Holy Spirit in my children? What, at Redeemer, are we involved in that is so beyond our own abilities that we can't just skirt through on our own? Tough



questions. So, what's amiss about asking tough questions? The world is a tough place, and if we think we are going to make a real impact on the pagan culture in which we live, if we think just raising nice, moral children is enough in the dark world around us ... well ... we're sadly mistaken.

No. 2019 and beyond will require all of us asking tirelessly for the Holy Spirit to show Himself in unmistakable ways in our midst. We need Him. But first we need to KNOW that we need Him. I pray this short meditation has served just that end. Come, Holy Spirit!



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