

Happenings at Hope

January – February, Vol. 4, No. 1

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Worship & Study

Sunday School & Bible Class
9:30am

The Divine Service
Sundays 10:30am
Wednesdays 7pm

Ladies' Bible Study
9:30am, the 1st Saturday of every month.

Hope Lutheran Church

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From the Pastor

Greetings to all of you members and friends of Hope Lutheran Church. This year is going to be one that is full of changes. One of these changes, that we already know about, is that which will take place in our nation's capital this coming Friday. On that day, Donald Trump will be sworn in as our next President. This is something on which our country is very divided. Many are happy about this change, while just as many are very disappointed.

But, no matter how we may feel, individually, about who our next president will be, we have all been called to by God to pray for our country, and its president, and to respect and obey its laws as far as His Word will allow. You will find in this issue of *Happenings at Hope* an article written by the Rev. Jay Webber (the father of your Rev. Webber) which explains this very well. You will also find a resumption of something that had been laid aside for several issues. As we continue, again, in our study of the various parts of the liturgy, this issue will include an explanation of the history and meaning of the Offertory Verse, more colloquially known as the "Create in Me."

And finally, as is always the case, in the back pages of the newsletter you will find information about upcoming events in our church, including the minutes from the congregational forum of voters that was held in December. May God bless and keep you this winter season.

- Pastor Webber

The Christian and His Government

On January 3, the new 115th Congress met in its first sessions – in the House of Representatives and in the Senate – to begin its legislative work. On January 20, a new President of the United States will be inaugurated, for a four year term. And at some point in the near future, a new Supreme Court Associate Justice will likely be nominated and confirmed, to fill a current vacancy on the court. We will see before our very eyes a new beginning, of one kind or another, in each of the three branches of government that are established for our country by the United States Constitution.

With respect to the civil authorities, St. Paul gives this instruction to us and all Christians in his Epistle to the Romans: *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.* (13:1-7, ESV)



It might seem odd to us to hear the apostle referring to government officials such as the Members of Congress, the President, and the Justices of the Supreme Court, as “ministers” of God. But that is what he calls them. And in the original Greek, it is the same word that he uses elsewhere in the epistle, when describing himself as *a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God* (15:16). As Paul and other Christian preachers serve God and the church by overseeing the administration of the means of grace, and by dispensing the gospel and the sacraments to Christians within the spiritual realm; so also do political officeholders serve God and the country by overseeing the maintenance of public order, and by dispensing justice and protection to

citizens within the civil realm. Both sets of activities, in both realms, are carried out in God's name and by God's authority. And just as God has established such positions of leadership and responsibility in these two realms, so too are those who serve in those positions accountable to God for the performance of their duties.

There are, however, some crucial distinctions to be made. Pastors and teachers in the church, according to their office, are not responsible for punishing wrongdoers in the larger society with temporal penalties. That is the responsibility of civil officers. The church's only sword is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). And civil officers are likewise not responsible for carrying out the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the church. That is what the church's ministers are called to do. And yet, as the people who serve in each kind of office carry out their respective duties, they are all doing the Lord's bidding, and are serving God's purposes. This is true just as much of political leaders as it is of religious leaders.

Leaders in the church are or should be accountable to God, by means of their submission to the Holy Scriptures, which provide a full revelation from God regarding the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Leaders in the state are not accountable to God in this way. Neither the Bible nor any other book of Scripture, from any religion, is an authoritative text for the civil laws of our land. Rather, the Constitutional officials of our civil government are or should be accountable to God by means of their submission to "the laws of nature and of nature's God," as the Declaration of Independence expresses it, through the use of proper moral reasoning, and in

sensitivity to the voice of their conscience.

St. Paul also speaks of this proper basis for public moral order, when he writes earlier in the same epistle concerning what all people know about God by nature. He states that *what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made* (1:19-20). Further on, in a comparison between Jews who have the written Law of Moses, and Gentiles who do not, Paul adds that *when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness* (2:14-15).

What we learn from this, is that while the secular authorities are not responsible for carrying out the distinctive work and mission of the church, and therefore do not need to have the kind of qualifications or abilities that pastors and Christian teachers need to have, they nevertheless are doing the Lord's work in their capacity as civil rulers, and are his "ministers" in that sense. This is also why we pray for our political leaders, just as we pray for our pastors and other church leaders. We heed St. Paul's words as found in his First Epistle to Timothy: *I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high*

positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior... (2:1-3, ESV)

Whether the President is a Democrat or a Republican, we pray for him. Whether the Congress is controlled by one party or the other, we pray for its members. Whether the Supreme Court's recent decisions have leaned left or right, we pray for the Justices. We pray that God will give to those who serve in such governmental offices an ever deeper awareness of their duty to promote civic righteousness, to guarantee equal justice under the law for all people, and to pursue policies that advance public ethics and morality. And we pray that God will give them ever greater wisdom and courage, in knowing in their conscience what the right course of action would be in any given situation, and in fulfilling that course of action for the benefit of those they serve. When they do understand and appreciate their proper role under God, and are paying attention to God's law as written on their hearts in their promotion of policies that are good for the society, we ask God to preserve them in that understanding. When they do not understand these things as they should, we pray that God would teach and guide them to better thinking, and to better Decisions.

What the civil authorities can always expect from the Christian citizens of the country, is an ongoing attitude of respect for them and their offices, and an ongoing solicitousness for their well-being. But what they can also expect from us, is that we will always be lifting them up in our prayers. We will always be asking God to shape their values, and direct their thoughts and actions, so that they will do as God wants them to do, and fulfill their

purpose and calling under God in a conscientious manner. We will always be imploring the Lord on their behalf, to show our political leaders the importance of being humble before the God who created them, and who providentially placed them into the offices that they hold. And, as we pray for them, we also pray for ourselves, that our Father in heaven, whom we know by faith through his Son Jesus Christ, would give us greater clarity of thought and conviction in regard to these matters; and a greater commitment to loving and serving our neighbors in the larger society, within and through the political mechanisms that are in place in our land.

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34, ESV).

Rev. Jay Webber
Redeemer Lutheran Church, Scottsdale, AZ

ELS Southwest States
Ladies Mission Rally:
February 12, 2017
Bishop, CA

Please plan on joining
ladies from Hope and other
ELS congregations for
fellowship, worship, and
learning about the mission
work of our synod.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Your Presence,
and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of Your salvation,
and uphold me with Your free Spirit. Amen.*

The *Offertory Verse*, also known as the “Create in Me,” is a musical arrangement of selected verses of Psalm 116. This song is sung in response to the instruction received in the sermon, as a prayer that through His Word, God will give us a heart clean from guilt and a renewed, Christian, Spirit. In our current liturgical usage, nothing else is happening while this song is being sung. But, in the ancient church, two things would happen while this song, or a longer version of it, would be sung. First, the offering would be collected. And then, the elements that were going to be used during Holy Communion were brought forward to the altar.

As we look at the words of this song itself, the first thing that jumps out is the contrast between the kind of heart that we are asking God to create in us, and the kind of heart with which we come into this world. We are born from sinners as sinners. Because of our sins, we are cut off from God and do not deserve to come into His presence. But, God is not content to leave those to whom He has given life cut off and far away from Him. This is why He promised and then sent His Son to us to atone for our sins and make it possible, through forgiveness, for God to give us everything for which we are asking him in this song.

But, in the Offertory, we are not only asking God to give us something; we are also asking that we could give back to Him and to His Church. This is because to have a clean heart and a right spirit means that we have been made able to do things that serve God and please Him. God loves a cheerful giver. He does not desire that Christians give from their money and time to support the work of His church out of fear. God wants Christians to *want* to do this. God wants His children to trust in Him completely, to know and believe with all their hearts that God will bless them and give them everything He knows they need both spiritually *and* temporally.

So, following the singing of the offertory verse, we do not give to support the ministry of the Gospel here and elsewhere because we *have* to. Rather, we give to God and His Church because we *can*. We realize that we are not worthy of any of the ways in which God has blessed us. We accept that our abilities, and the jobs in which we use them, and also our new Christian selves, are all blessings from God. And, because we want others to know how God has and can bless them, we support the work of His Church.

May we always be inspired by God's blessings to us to be a blessing to others.

- Pastor Webber



Parish News

2016 4th Quarter Meeting Minutes

Membership:

Acceptance: Chris Crabbe

Release: +Janet Siddoway+

Church Property:

The New Sign was installed. The cost was subsidized by the ELS Board for Home Missions

The need for an upgrade in the Sanctuary lighting was discussed and approved (note: this work has been completed, as you have surely noticed)

Jim and Marsha Eidson were thanked for their regular donation of time and materials to keep the church clean.

The voters approved a plan to remove the ivy on the sanctuary-side of the wall facing 9000 S.

Website

Hope will soon be getting a new website, and also the equipment necessary to stream and record the whole service.

Because this is a very important outreach tool, the cost is going to be heavily subsidized by the ELS Board for Home Missions

**Please plan on attending the 2017 first-quarter meeting:
February 19th, following the service**

Parish News

Upcoming Events

February

4 – Ladies Study & Ladies of Hope

10-12 – ELS Southwest Ststes Ladies' Mission Rally

19 – 1st Quarter Congregational Forum



January

7 – Karen Clymer
14 – Matthew Christensen
15 – Marta Webber
17 – Jeffery Olsen
29 – Melonie Carson

February

2 – Barb Rowland
3 – McCoy Curtis
7 – John Webber
9 – Steve Rowland
25 – Grace Hoffman