

## *2018 Stewardship of Mission ~ devotions for leaders*

### *November 2018: Our Redeemer/Nuestro Redentor*

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Livingston, CA, located in the Central Valley agricultural region, was founded in the 1920s as a bilingual congregation – German and English – of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. In the 1970s, Our Redeemer was served by a Seminex pastor and became a congregation of the AELC. During that time, they were just beginning to talk about reaching out to the Latino community around them. When Pastor Bill Ruth was called, the Spanish-language outreach began in earnest. Pastor Bill had learned Spanish as a second language and he knew Cesar Chavez, so he began an outreach to farm workers. A food program serving hot meals at the church was started. Pastor Bill did a funeral service in Spanish for someone who had been coming to the food program. Later, a couple who met through the food program got married. Their wedding was the first Spanish/English bilingual service at Our Redeemer.

The congregation began holding two worship services each Sunday, one in Spanish and one in English, which continued for many years, including up until recently under Pastor Patricia Vargas. Then came a defining moment, when the congregation worked together to develop a purpose statement. After many meetings and melding of ideas, it became clear that the mission was to serve the community in two languages in everything, in “ministry with” not “ministry to,” celebrating diversity and bridging cultures:

***El propósito de Dios para nuestro Redentor / Nuestro Redentor es para todo el mundo para vivir la gracia y la paz de Dios, sin importar la raza, el color, la lengua o la orientación sexual. God's purpose for Our Redeemer / Nuestro Redentor is for everyone to experience the grace and peace of God regardless of race, color, language or sexual orientation.***

The congregation is about half Latino and half Anglo, and they see themselves as one congregation. They have united into one worship service that is entirely bilingual, with a potluck once a month. The council is also composed of about half Latino, half Anglo, and council meetings are completely bilingual. The husband of the couple from that first bilingual wedding service now serves as president of the congregation! English-speaking members are concerned that Spanish speakers are not left out of anything; likewise, the Spanish-speaking members are concerned that English speakers are not left out of anything.

Livingston has many worship services in Spanish only and many in English only, but Our Redeemer / Nuestro Redentor offers the only bilingual worship service in the city. The message the congregation wishes to share with our synod is that we would all be so blessed to be more diverse. We are a priesthood of all believers, and we have so much to learn from each other.

*“How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?... in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” (Acts 2:8, 11)*

#### Reflections

Have you ever been part of a gathering or worship service where you didn’t understand the language? How did that feel? Did anyone assist you? How did you feel then?

Who are those among and around us who communicate in other languages? How can we, or how do we, help them to hear the Gospel “in their own languages”?