

Life Together in the Melting Pot

Location: Redeemer Lutheran Church, Hyattsville, Md.

THE SCENARIO

Just outside our nation's Capitol can be seen the famous national motto, *E pluribus unum* (Out of many, one). This motto is being lived out at Redeemer Lutheran Church. Immigrants from more than a dozen countries have come together to form this single congregation. Despite the differing backgrounds and first languages of its members, we are the one Body of Christ who worship and have their life together.

It began when the area started to change ethnically and the pastor became very intentional about inviting nonwhites to Redeemer and its day school (Redeemer was 100 percent Caucasian at this time). The first person of color was an African-American doctor. The pastor who initiated this change left Redeemer after some difficult circumstances. The congregation then called a pastor who also happened to be a German immigrant. As immigrants and refugees started sending their kids to the school, he was the perfect person to reach them. The congregation embraced the change under this pastor who gently taught the theology of mercy and outreach. Liturgics, doctrine and outreach remained a constant in the midst of diversity and change, even to this day.

TO LEARN MORE

Redeemer Lutheran Church
Pastor Eric Linthicum
3799 East West Highway
Hyattsville, Md. 20782
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Director of LCMS Urban & Inner-City Mission Rev. Steven Schave, center in vest, is pictured after worshipping with members of Redeemer Lutheran Church.

THE MINISTRY

Under the pastoral care of the church's current pastor, the Rev. Eric Linthicum, immigrants are intentionally being included in leadership (two elders now, one more coming). The congregation continues to be firmly liturgical and includes the catechism lesson in worship, which acts as a bond of unity among the varying national origins. Now, with the school closed, the immigrant congregants are going out and finding other people from their home churches and towns. And they are being very intentional about reaching out to them and inviting them to worship at Redeemer.

The congregation also rents the building for English for speakers of other languages classes, which bring people of many languages into the building and gives the church another opportunity to connect with them. There also is a compassion center that allows for outreach through human care across the diverse population of the community. The center is a collaborative effort and joint ministry of Redeemer, where it is located, along with Trinity Lutheran Church in Mount Rainier, Md., and the Lutheran Mission Society. One subtle but yet powerful tool is the chalkboard in the compassion center. The word "Welcome" is written in all the languages of those whom the center serves (Romanian was just added). It is actually a fantastic outreach tool. It reminds us of the day of Pentecost in which the people heard their native tongues being spoken. And yet the diverse congregation in worship is the picture of heaven described in the book of Revelation, in which there is one Lord, one faith and one Baptism that unites them all.