

Forward in Christ

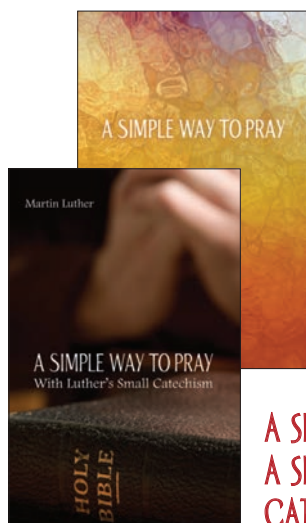
A LUTHERAN VOICE

The Word endures

Through the Reformation, the Lord
opened the door of faith to all.

Celebrating OUR HERITAGE

When he unrolled his parchment and swung his hammer at the doors of the Wittenberg Castle Church 500 years ago this month, Martin Luther sparked one of the most significant movements in history: the Reformation. Join us in celebrating this historic event, in learning more about Luther and the Reformation movement, and in giving thanks for God's guiding hand in the church.

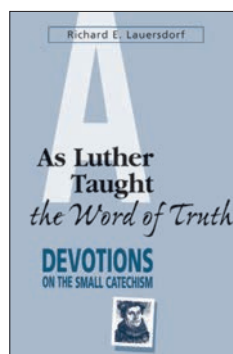


A SIMPLE WAY TO PRAY

by Martin Luther

Take heart in Luther's helpful advice for prayer, using the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, or the Ten Commandments to begin. *A Simple Way to Pray* will assist you in focusing your prayer thoughts and will encourage you to come before your heavenly Father often. *A Simple Way to Pray With Luther's Small Catechism* includes the full text of Luther's Small Catechism. Softcover, 28 and 47 pages.

A SIMPLE WAY TO PRAY LU0600751, \$2.99
A SIMPLE WAY TO PRAY WITH LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM LU0600752, \$4.99



AS LUTHER TAUGHT THE WORD OF TRUTH: DEVOTIONS ON THE SMALL CATECHISM

by Richard E. Lauersdorf

Recall the vital, faith-building truths of Luther's Small Catechism with this collection of 58 devotions. Each timeless and inspiring message will help you grow closer to Christ and foster greater

appreciation for the Bible's truths as Luther taught them. Softcover, 198 pages. **LU060722, \$16.99**

A RETURN TO GRACE: LUTHER'S LIFE AND LEGACY

Preorder this new Martin Luther film to witness the dramatic moments that shaped the life of this great reformer. Luther shared many of our own questions about life and faith, and the answers he found launched the Reformation movement.

A Return to Grace: Luther's Life and Legacy will help you understand—just as Luther did—that the only place to turn for truth is God's Holy Word. Be one of the first to own it this Reformation season!

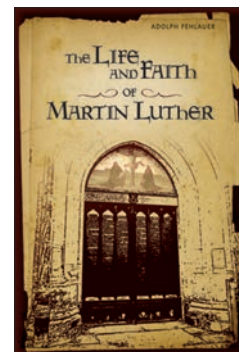
LU3303025, \$14.50 – AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 2017



THE LIFE AND FAITH OF MARTIN LUTHER

By Adolph F. Fehlauer

Follow and celebrate Martin Luther's quest as God guided his efforts to return the church to the Word. Each chapter examines a different stage of Luther's life from his time as a student to his work as a reformer. *The Life and Faith of Martin Luther* and its welcoming style will grant you essential insights into Luther's journey and show you his remarkable impact on Christian teachings. Includes maps and illustrations. Softcover, 131 pages. **LU150376, \$10.99**



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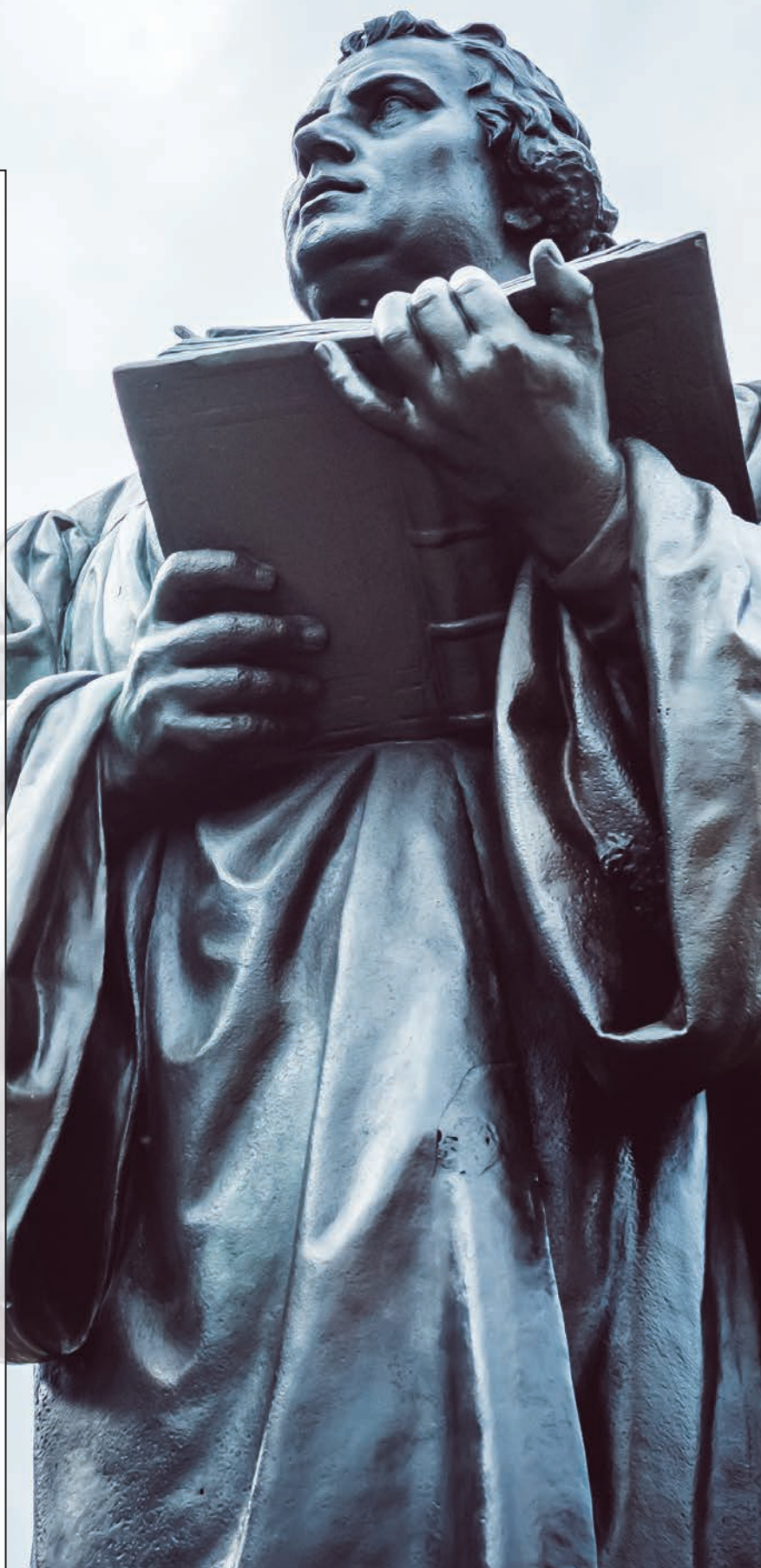
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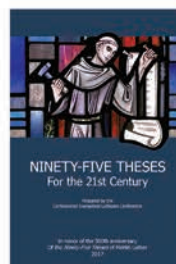
United voices; treasured truths

In honor of the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, a worldwide association of confessional Lutheran church bodies, has prepared a new set of theses, "Ninety-Five Theses for the 21st Century." These contemporary statements of faith by modern confessional Lutherans share the truths we all treasure.

Watch a video at wels.net/reformation500

of leaders from sister church bodies around the world reading these statements in their own languages and celebrate our shared beliefs as heirs of the Lutheran Reformation.

Learn more about the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference at celc.info.



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May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. — 1 KINGS 8:57

WHAT'S INSIDE

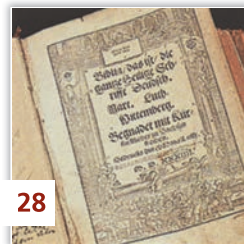
Welcome to our special Reformation issue of *Forward in Christ*. In celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 1717, we already have been highlighting our Lutheran heritage throughout the year, concentrating especially on biblical teachings Luther emphasized. You'll find even more this month, including a look at Luther's far-reaching influence (p. 28), a history lesson on Katie Luther (p. 26), and a focus on the heart of the Reformation message: We are saved by grace alone through faith in Christ (p. 10).

We're excited to share an added keepsake insert this month that includes a timeline on the development of Lutheranism as well as quotes from you, our readers, about what it means to be Lutheran.

All your favorite columns and features also still are included. Our "Confessions of faith" article introduces you to a woman born in Eisleben, Germany, when it was communist-controlled and tells her journey of faith (p. 14). And don't miss "Heart to heart" for perspectives from two dads about ways to teach children about the Reformation (p. 16). Our news section recaps the synod convention held this past summer as well as gives ideas for how you personally can celebrate the Reformation (pp. 20-25).

We pray this focus on the Reformation and the teachings Luther rediscovered encourages you in your faith and in your efforts to share the life-saving gospel message with others.

Julie Wietzke



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THOUGHTS ON HYMNS

As a new hymnal is being prepared, I would like to pass along these thoughts.

First of all, should we consider the purpose of a Christian hymn? Why are we singing rather than simply saying? Is it not to express our feelings—the emotion arising in our hearts because of our faith experience?

There are also places in the liturgy for us to speak the wonders of faith and God's love.

To me, a hymn lacking the combination of words and melody that expresses the heart as well as the mind is a contrivance—sometimes even a struggle to join words with notes. Perhaps these are better prayerfully said then sung. Some would say that melody, like art, is in the eye or ear of the beholder. Yet my experience has been that there is consensus when an emotionally compelling hymn is sung. The Bible tells us to love God with all our heart and all our mind. In WELS worship, there is abundant mind—I wish for more heart. There is no worship without emotion, without heart. . . .

*Gilbert Holtz
Fishers, New York*

I read “God’s Love: Our song forever” by Aaron Christie [Aug.]. Having worked with music for most of my life, both playing and singing, I just had to add my comment where he said that “Luther’s hymns were never written to promote toe-tapping, but to enable truth telling.” I truly love Lutheran music, but I also know that if after a church service you were to ask the people about which song they received the best message from, they would NOT have a definite answer for you. Is this really what we want to gain from our church music? . . .

The people need to be touched by the sermon, but also by the music. Every hymn does not need to be a song about the sacraments, as Christie mentioned; however, because we have a deep love for our Lord, we need to be joyful and sing his praises with that love.

It will be interesting to see how the new hymnal comes forth. I know that it is not going to be an easy job for the Hym-

nal Committee, but I would just like to ask each one of them, “Did you recall the hymns that were sung in your most recent church service, or did you find it kind of ho-hum and just another song?”

*Dorothy Kemp
Chino Valley, Arizona*

TAKING TIME TO PRAY

The 2017 synod convention inspired me as a lay delegate in many ways. Acting to pray intercessory prayers for others is one of the many ways.

Most presenters during the convention ended their report with a request for our prayers. “Our” can easily be defined as all individuals in WELS since we are the synod.

Their requests have remained fresh well after the convention ended. The requests were not simply nice endings to important reports. They are meant to be the lifeblood of continuing successful programs. They are requests for prayers for God’s help. One such request came from Rev. Dr. Yigezu of the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia. His request was to pray for them that they might train a new generation to serve God.

So what do we do with those requests? One answer is to attempt to get the message out. Over 30 years ago, my pastor commented, “If you come to

church without prayers to say, I feel sorry for you.” That encouragement reverberates with me to this day. Acting on his statement is prudent. That can be accomplished by writing a list of things to pray for during the meditation period prior to a church service. The list can be broken into sections to use each Sunday of the month. That list will require a lot of paper when you begin to think of what should be added. Let’s start with foreign missions (training a new generation), home missions (local souls to save), the president of our synod and the Synodical Council (what responsibility!), your pastors, teachers, family, nation, (there is no room for a period in this sentence) . . .

My prayer is that you try what is suggested here. Make a prayer list for yourself and act on it. God will be pleased. He loves hearing from you.

*Royce Kriewall
Bay City, Michigan*

Through my Bible in 3 years

Read or listen online at wels.net/bible3.

OCTOBER 2017

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. Proverbs 10:1–11:13 | 12. Pr. 26:13–27:27 | 23. Ro. 4:16–25 |
| 2. Pr. 11:14–12:28 | 13. Pr. 28 & 29 | 24. Ro. 5:1–11 |
| 3. Pr. 13:1–14:21 | 14. Pr. 30 | 25. Ro. 5:12–21 |
| 4. Pr. 14:22–15:23 | 15. Pr. 31 | 26. Ro. 6:1–14 |
| 5. Pr. 15:24–16:33 | 16. Romans 1:1–17 | 27. Ro. 6:15–7:6 |
| 6. Pr. 17 & 18 | 17. Ro. 1:18–32 | 28. Ro. 7:7–25 |
| 7. Pr. 19:1–20:13 | 18. Ro. 2:1–16 | 29. Ro. 8:1–17 |
| 8. Pr. 20:14–22:16 | 19. Ro. 2:17–29 | 30. Ro. 8:18–39 |
| 9. Pr. 22:17–23:35 | 20. Ro. 3:1–20 | 31. Ro. 9:1–13 |
| 10. Pr. 24 | 21. Ro. 3:21–31 | |
| 11. Pr. 25:1–26:12 | 22. Ro. 4:1–15 | |

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The sounds of the Reformation

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. Psalm 78:4

Joel C. Seifert

Bam! Bam! Bam! The sounds came from the hammer driving the nails through the paper. A Catholic professor posted his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the university church.

Fwoosh! Three years later, Martin Luther held a copy of a letter from the Pope. In it, the Pope condemned many of Luther's teachings. Knowing he was at risk of excommunication, Luther stood in front of a crowd and dropped the letter into a fire, watching the flames consume it.

"Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God!" Six months later, Luther refused to recant his teachings at the Diet of Worms. He would stand with God's Word, no matter what it cost him.

Those were the sounds of the Reformation. But open up your catechism, and you'll find words written by Luther that call to mind some of the most dramatic and powerful Reformation sounds of all. Over each chief article of faith, Luther wrote this: "As the head of the family should teach it in the simplest way to those in his household."

LET REFORMATION TRUTHS SOUND LOUDLY IN OUR HOMES

God gave the apostle Paul a helper, Timothy, a "son in the faith," to help carry out the gospel ministry. Timothy had learned God's truth at home. Paul wrote: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5).

Even though the visible church of their day had lost a clear view of Jesus and preached work-righteousness, Timothy's grandmother and mother passed on the truth of Scripture at home. Luther reminds us: Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is



they who make them acquainted with the gospel.

They say that good character and values are "more caught than taught." Our children are always watching us and learning from our examples. But faith is *only* taught, *never* caught. Our children don't learn of Jesus by watching us speak honestly and act fairly. They learn as we sit down with them, open the Bible, and let God tell them of his wonderful works. "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done."

We speak God's Word, and faith lives in them!

FROM CHRISTIAN HOMES TO THE WORLD

It happens in seemingly humble and gradual ways. A nightly devotion. Morning prayers. Asking questions about Sunday school lessons and sermons. Every day, as countless Christians read their Bible, God pours out his Spirit. Soul by soul, believers learn to love God's truth and take their stand on it.

What does a Reformation sound like?

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, you'll hear preachers proclaim grace from pulpits. You'll hear churches resounding with powerful cantatas and echoing with "A Mighty Fortress." You'll go to Bible studies about holding on to God's Word in truth and purity. Those are wonderful sounds!

Every day, as countless Christians read their Bible, God pours out his Spirit.

And, Lord willing, behind all of those sounds, you'll hear some of the most beautiful and influential sounds of the Reformation as families gather to read and listen to the Bible, the catechism, or devotions. Those are the sounds of the Reformation. And when they ring out, God's truth echoes again in the next generation.

Contributing editor Joel Seifert is pastor at Shining Mountains, Bozeman, Montana.



Mark Schweder

By God's grace,
it is never too
late for us as
individuals and
as a synod to
listen to Luther's
warning and seize
the gospel and
hold it fast.

One lesson from Reformation history

The bus made its way through rolling hills and green pastures, very much reminding me of the beautiful landscape of southern Wisconsin. But it was not Wisconsin. Piercing the morning sky in the distance was the spire of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. I soon would be standing in the birthplace of the Lutheran Reformation.

At our first stop in Wittenberg, we found ourselves at the doors of the church where Martin Luther posted 95 theological statements, or theses, that he wanted to debate. Inside that church, we stood before the grave of the Reformer himself, with his right-hand man, Philip Melancthon, buried just a few feet away.

Just a few blocks down the street, we stopped at another church—the City Church of St. Mary's. It was here that Luther preached hundreds of sermons, explaining scriptural truths in a language that the lowliest peasant and the youngest child could understand.

Strolling down the cobblestone streets of Wittenberg, we passed the home where Philip Melancthon lived and stopped at the home of Lucas Cranach, an artist and friend of Luther.

Then, at the end of the street, I found myself at the Black Cloister, the former monastery given to Luther as a home for his family and a place where visitors and students became lodgers. I stood in the room where Luther sat at the head of the massive table—Katie seated to his right—and where often 40 or more people would gather for meals and lively conversation.

It may have all happened five hundred years ago, but seeing those places made the events of the Reformation seem like anything but ancient history or dusty remnants of the past.

One thing, perhaps more than any other, struck me as I strolled the streets of Wit-

tenberg. Halfway through the tour, it began to rain—softly at first, then more heavily. We ducked inside a café, and then the rain stopped. I couldn't help but think of one of Luther's more memorable illustrations: "For you should know that God's word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been. . . . And [you should] not think that you will have it forever, for ingratitude and contempt will not make it stay. Therefore, seize it and hold it fast, whoever can" (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 45, p. 352,353).

Sadly, the empty Lutheran churches and the decline of Christianity in Europe have proven Luther's words to be true. In the centuries after Luther, the gospel has moved from its gracious downpour in Europe to other lands. Here in the United States, we have been blessed with the nourishing showers of the gospel for centuries. One can't help but wonder: Are we about to see history repeated through our own ingratitude and contempt? Will the gospel shower continue its move to other lands and other people because of closed ears, hard hearts, and thankless complacency?

By God's grace, it is never too late for us as individuals and as a synod to listen to Luther's warning and seize the gospel and hold it fast; to hunger and thirst for the Word as if our eternal life depended on it (because it does); to feel the precious raindrops of God's grace and to pray that the rain of his gospel continues to nourish our faith and to equip us to serve; and to rededicate ourselves to proclaiming the truths we treasure as Lutherans.

If that is the lesson we learn from the history of the Reformation, it will be a lesson well worth learning.

Light for our path

Why was Martin Luther against so many of the books that are in the Roman Catholic Bible and some that remain in ours also? Also, why did the Protestant Bible throw away so many books, ones it had before the Reformation?

James F. Pope

Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone) is one of the great Reformation emphases. The phrase underscores the truth that Scripture alone is the source and foundation of our faith. Since that is the case, it is important to understand what constitutes “Scripture.” Your questions help sharpen that understanding by addressing some misconceptions.

OPINIONS OF MARTIN LUTHER

Like other theologians before and after him, Martin Luther had opinions of certain biblical books. His views on the book of James, for example, are well-known. To Luther, the book of James seemed to support the idea that people contributed to their salvation by their good works. However, a careful look at the context of the book of James reveals that the author is reminding Christians that good works flow from saving faith. Still, Luther had concerns about the book of James, as well as the books of Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation.

So how do we regard these concerns and thoughts of Luther? We recognize them as his opinions. While we thank God for giving Luther many insights into God’s Word, Luther is not the foundation of our faith. Jesus Christ is. Luther’s writings are not the foundation of our faith. The Bible is. *Sola Scriptura*. We can disagree with Luther when it comes to something like his views on the book of James. There is no disagreeing, however, with Jesus Christ, and he is at the forefront of the answer to your second question.

A PRONOUNCEMENT BY JESUS CHRIST

Your second question refers to the Apocrypha—additional books in Roman Catholic Bibles. There is a faulty starting point with the question though, thinking that all followers of God have always recog-

nized the apocryphal books as being divinely inspired. That is not the case. The apocryphal books were never included in the Hebrew Bibles of God’s Old Testament people. The Jews listed the Old Testament books in three categories: the law, the prophets, and the writings. The apocryphal books were not included in any of those categories.

Jesus himself testified to that during his earthly ministry. When the risen Lord appeared to his frightened disciples on Easter Sunday evening, he explained that his suffering, death, and resurrection were all fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy. He told them: “Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). (The psalms are prominent among the “writings.”) Jesus pronounced the Hebrew Bible—without the Apocrypha—to be the authoritative Word of God.

So, it is really not a case of the Protestant Bible throwing away books it had before the Reformation. When it comes to the Apocrypha, it is a matter of the Roman Catholic Church adding those books to its version of the Bible. And, incidentally, Rome officially did that in 1546, the year Luther died.

Finally, you might be interested to know that Martin Luther included the Apocrypha in the German Bible he produced. His preface said the Apocrypha was not inspired but was useful for reading. That was another way of indicating “Scripture alone.”

Contributing editor James Pope, professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.

James Pope also answers questions online at wels.net/questions. Submit your questions there or to fic@wels.net.

Your
word
is a lamp
for my feet,
a light on
my path.

Psalm 119:105

ABIDING

truth

Gospel freedom is often a Reformation truth we take for granted.

Wade R. Johnston

What has become the most memorable Reformation truth of our hymns, the most powerful of our preachments, the most lasting in our conversations as brothers and sisters? What was the point of Luther's Reformation? It's the very thing we so easily take for granted, that the church in every age has been tempted to move beyond, that resonates so poorly with our fallen human nature: that Christ was crucified for sinners—and you qualify.

How can we take this for granted? Can we forget both what we were and what we are? We were dead in trespasses and sins, lost, condemned under the law, slaves to iniquity, and subject to God's wrath. We were that way before we could walk or talk, cheat or steal. We were born that way. Now we are children of God. We have been redeemed, forgiven, ransomed, set free. We have been born that way, born *again* in the waters of Holy Baptism. We are this, not on our own but in Christ—by grace, through faith—which is the gift of God through the Word.

At the heart of Luther's message is the distinction in Lutheran theology: law and gospel. The law kills. The gospel makes alive. The law accuses. The gospel pardons. The law exposes. The gospel clothes. The law says "do," and it can never be completely done, and the gospel says "done," and all that is done is freely given, completed by Christ who died and rose for us.

SAINT AND SINNER

We find freedom in this gospel. And yet we remain sinner-saints on this side of the grave. That is, while we are children of God, the sinful flesh still hangs around our neck—the old Adam still kicks and screams, tempts and prods. For this reason, we can take the gospel for granted. The old Adam tugs and pushes us back under the law or into lawless immorality.

Perhaps we want to let works back into salvation, to do something—any something, even just a little—to help Christ out, to climb the ladder to heaven just a little under our own power. The other temptation is that we want to plunge into lawlessness, to abuse our freedom, to live as though we have been freed to sin and not freed from sin.

Whatever the case, freedom can be scary, and life as a sinner-saint is a struggle. We can easily become distracted, sidetracked, bored, or ungrateful with God's good gifts and his gospel.

As we celebrate this
500th anniversary of the
Lutheran Reformation, now is
the time to refocus and to reclaim
our freedom, not by doing but
by receiving and by hearing.

FREEDOM TO LIVE

As we celebrate this 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, now is the time to refocus and to reclaim our freedom, not by doing but by receiving and by hearing. And Christ is still speaking. The Word is still living. The Spirit is still active. The church is still standing. The pulpit, altar, and font still call out, "Freedom, freedom, here is true freedom: freedom to live life in a world given back to you, all as a gift, all in Christ, all for your neighbor. You need nothing more. You are free from sin to live for Jesus and others."

The gospel isn't just a set of facts; it's a force. It's a force that stakes claims and declares realities. Luther

realized this. The righteous live by faith. That's right, they live! Confident in their standing before God, the righteous are set free to stand in grace, walk in the Spirit, and serve with the trust that no work is too small in Christ's sight, no neighbor too unworthy, no audience too slight. The Christian is called out of point-keeping and ladder-climbing and kudos-earning into spontaneous, selfless, joyous service to Christ and neighbor—not for salvation, but as one saved. The Christian is free. Free to be a father or mother, to enjoy a meal, to dance, to sing, to work, to talk and listen and laugh, not in order to be something, but rather having been declared, already being, something—namely, God's own child.

When everything is a gift, all that is left is freedom and joy and peace, even in suffering. Enamored with Christ, who first loved us and gave himself for us, we receive the world and all that is in it back again from his pierced hands for what it is. We look forward to a new heaven and a new world that will transcend anything here or anything we can imagine. We can let today be today, this world be this world, and thus live freely in the moment and in this life, even as we pine for the new Jerusalem that awaits.

Next time you find yourself less than impressed with the church's chief message and gift to the world, Christ crucified for sinners, remember that you qualify. Ask yourself if you've fallen back into slavery, whether to sin or to work-righteousness; whether you've been living tit-for-tat, as someone with no tomorrow or with a today that is less than a gift. And then remember that you've been buried to such fruitless effort; that you've been baptized into new life; and that you are a son or daughter of the Jesus Christ who died your death, not for you to live in chains but to set you free.

One of my favorite prayers is a short one: "Jesus, be Jesus for me." Jesus is Jesus for me. And Jesus is Jesus for you. That is the whole point of the Scriptures. Jesus came to be Jesus for us.

So, look around. See the world around you. See it for what it is: your family, your friends, your job—all of it. It's for you, from Jesus. It's a world given back to a sinner declared a saint, to a dead man or woman brought back to life.

Wade Johnston, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is a member at Nain, West Allis, Wisconsin.

As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, this is the tenth article in a 12-part series on our Lutheran heritage.

LUTHER

still speaks

As the Reformation continued, Luther voiced a deep concern. In a sermon on John 7:37-39, he warned, "When the Word of God first arose, twelve or fifteen years ago, people diligently listened to it, and everybody was glad that 'good works' were no longer to plague them. They said: God be praised that we now have water to drink. For then we were thirsty, and the doctrine tasted fine; we drank of it and found it a precious teaching. But now we are sated; we are tired of the drink and are surfeited with it" (*What Luther Says*, Vol. 3, #3817).

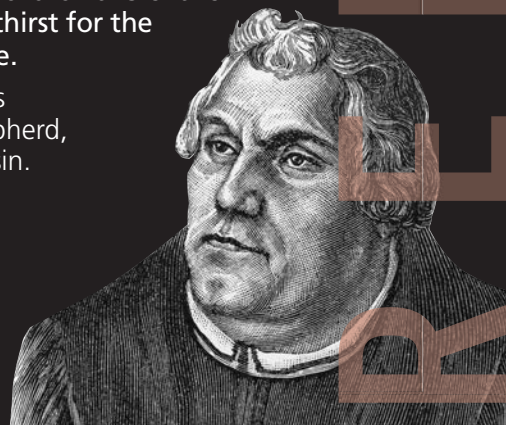
"Familiarity breeds contempt," states an old proverb. This can happen also with the "pearl" of the Reformation, the teaching that we are saved by grace alone through faith in Christ's work of redemption. The more we hear this saving truth, the more it might fade in value in our sight.

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," the pastor preaches in every sermon. Having heard it all before, we might be tempted just to nod nonchalantly. "Jesus died for me," we teach our children. But again, that blessed truth can become a sentence recited only by rote instead of with joy.

Our itching ears may want something new, something more modern and relevant. Something that centers on man's efforts instead of on God's timeless grace. Something that addresses the needs in society instead of the thirst of the soul.

This month as we celebrate the Reformation, may the Lord of the church give us a renewed thirst for the gospel water of life.

Richard Lauersdorf is pastor at Good Shepherd, West Bend, Wisconsin.





God's love: Our song forever

Luther's key musical reform of the church was that his hymns literally put the words and teaching of the gospel on people's lips.

Aaron L. Christie

Luther's Small Catechism is a witness to the fact that the Lutheran Reformation was primarily a reform of the church's *teaching*. Millions of illiterate people were in desperate need of Scripture's teaching. Luther's solution was the Small Catechism—careful summaries of biblical truth that could be easily memorized. Lutheran boys and girls have been asking, “What does this mean?” ever since.

In his Large Catechism, Luther provides us with a window into the purpose of his hymns: “When these parts have been well learned, one may assign them also some psalms or hymns, based on these subjects, to supplement and confirm their knowledge. Thus young people will be led into the Scriptures and make progress every day” (Preface, 25). In short, the songs were to be intimately connected with the student's biblical learning. Based upon Luther's advice, Lutheran pastors and teachers have been assigning their students memory work from the hymnal ever since.

A little over a year after Luther's catechisms came off the presses, the Lutheran territories of Germany pre-

sented a confession of their faith before the emperor in the city of Augsburg on June 25, 1530. This confession opens the same window on a Lutheran view of the hymn's role in worship: “Moreover, no noticeable changes have been made in the public celebration of the Mass, except that in certain places German hymns are sung alongside the Latin responses *for the instruction and exercise of the people*” (Augsburg Confession XXIV:2,3, emphasis added).

This is most certainly true: Luther and our early Lutheran fathers firmly believed in teaching hymnody.

Practically speaking, how did this play out in the reformation of worship? For a man who grew up dreading the fire of purgatory and praying to saints, it is simply astounding how conservative Luther was in the reform of the church's worship. Luther didn't opt for an ax to hack down everything; instead he picked up the surgeon's scalpel. He used a steady theological hand in reforming the service. Most of his changes removed praying to the saints and references that made the Lord's Supper a sacrifice for sins.

Another significant reform was the people's role in worship. For the average worshiper in the Middle Ages, worship was a "spectator's sport"—something that the priest did at the altar rather than something engaged in from the pew. If the common people sang, the songs usually retold the legends of the saints rather than the story of the Savior. Luther's key musical reform of the church was that his hymns literally put the words and teaching of the gospel on people's lips.

Luther's key musical insight for the church also happens to be the Scripture's key insight. In many Scripture references, we can easily find the saints praising God by proclaiming the gospel in song. This leads us to another key Lutheran emphasis: The truths of the gospel are more than a body of facts we can recite. The truths of the gospel are God's saving power (Romans 1:16)! Through their hymns, Lutheran Christians proclaim the saving power of Christ!

Now take a moment to peruse Luther's hymns in our hymnal.

Luther's poetry may be vigorous and engaging, but rarely, if ever, does Luther get personal, expressing what he thinks, feels, or does. Instead, Luther's hymns teach the Scriptures. They were deliberately penned to place the words and doctrines of Scripture on people's lips and hearts. That's why anti-reform voices in Luther's day would often quip that Luther's hymns had damned more souls than all his sermons combined!

Some of Luther's hymns simply put the psalms into verse and rhyme: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (*Christian Worship* [CW] 200/01); "If God Had Not Been on Our Side" (CW 202); "O Lord, Look Down from Heaven" (CW 205); and "May God Bestow on Us His Grace" (CW 574).

Through them, the songs of Israel's temple became the songs of Wittenberg's shopkeepers.

Several of Luther's hymns were based on the songs of the liturgy or Scripture's canticles: "Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above" (CW 266); "All Glory Be to God Alone" (CW 262); "Isaiah, Mighty Seer in Days of Old" (CW 267); and "In Peace and Joy I Now Depart" (CW 269). Through them, the ancient songs of the church became the song of peasants and maids.

Through their hymns, Lutheran Christians proclaim the saving power of Christ!

An important group of hymns shows us that Luther knew how to take his own advice to "assign them also some psalms or hymns." Luther's so-called "Catechism Hymns" serve as a musical supplement to the catechism: "The Ten Commandments Are the Law" (CW 285); "We All Believe in One True God" (CW 271); "Our Father, Who from Heaven Above" (CW 410); "To Jordan Came the Christ, Our Lord" (CW 88); "From Depths of Woe I Cry to You" (CW 305); "Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior" (CW 313); and "O Lord, We Praise You" (CW 317). Through these hymns the doctrines of Scripture became the song of school boys and girls. They serve as a musical answer to the question, "What does this mean?"

A final group of many other hymns brings the saving story of Christ to the people. "Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice" (CW 377) and "From Heaven

Above to Earth I Come" (CW 38) are two prime examples. Through these hymns the eternal gospel goes to work in time and space, converting human hearts to faith and confirming the faith of the converted.

The Reformation of the church was born of an academic debate over the role of indulgences in repentance. The Reformation not only survived, but it grew and thrived because it deliberately placed the preaching, teaching, and singing of the gospel of Jesus Christ at the center of the home, the classroom, the pulpit, and the hymnal. Our Lutheran fathers learned these scriptural lessons with care. And we well have fared!

Hymns that teach us the gospel: It is pure privilege to sing them. We need to sing them. The world needs us to sing them.

Aaron Christie, the chairman of the Hymnody Committee, is pastor at Trinity, Waukesha, Wisconsin.

This is the fourth article in a nine-part series on hymns and their use in our churches.

The WELS Hymnal Project wants your feedback as it works on finalizing which of the more than 700 hymns from *Christian Worship* and *Christian Worship: Supplement* will be included in the new hymnal. Every month the WELS Hymnal Project will post a selection of hymns online, indicating which hymns are slated to be kept and which are slated to be cut. You can view the monthly list and, if you want, choose up to 10 hymns from the cut list that you would like to see kept in the new hymnal. To review this month's list of hymns and take part in the process, visit welshymnal.com.

A German from communist-controlled Eisleben becomes a Lutheran in British Columbia.

Ann M. Ponath

"In spite of the countless times I have transgressed against my holy God, he assures me time and again that I am his forgiven child. Nothing and nobody bars my way to heaven! Now it is safe for me to die."

Earlier this year, *Forward in Christ* asked readers what it means to be Lutheran (see insert). This inspiring quote arrived from Canada. Even more interesting—the writer, Monika Weihmann, grew up in Eisleben, Luther's hometown. She commented: "Martin Luther was a real Mensch; he had his faults and limitations, yet the Lord used him so greatly. What a blessing he has been to all of us."

GROWING UP IN EAST GERMANY

Just how did a German from communist-controlled Eisleben end up as a Lutheran in British Columbia? Monika explains: "I was born in Eisleben when it was still behind the Iron Curtain. Growing up under the communist regime, I was anything but [Lutheran]. Yet the Lord had plans and has been an everyday part of [my life] for 54 years now."

Monika was born just two weeks after the end of WWII in May 1945. Her father, who had been in the German Navy during the war, did not return home to his family after the war. Her parents divorced, and Monika's father eventually immigrated to Canada.

Monika says, "My mother had to fend for herself and two girls in post-war East Germany. Life was tough." Her mother worked at a grocery store while the landlady "made sure my older sister, Erika, and I didn't get into too much trouble." Food stamps, stamps for coal, and supplies were often gone before they got to the end of long lines. "Everyone we knew was equally poor, but we all survived," says Monika. "In retrospect, I can apply Matthew 6:26 to our situation, but no one in our world considered God at all."

Under Communism, "religion was definitely not part of the ideology, but our family was never religious," says Monika. "Church was for Christmas Eve, weddings, baptisms, and funerals." As for Luther, Monika says everyone knew of him and the bronze statue in front of the church where he preached his last sermon. But she says, "In the East German version of history, Luther was the great 'social reformer' who went against the church and the corruption that was so prevalent."

Monika was baptized in the Lutheran church "because that's what one did then." But things changed quickly. "By

the time this first post-war generation reached the age of confirmation, the communist regime had devised a substitute in the form of '*Jugendweihe*,' a so-called 'youth dedication,' where we dressed in formal clothing—exactly as if we were to be confirmed," she says. "We had a convocation and promised to be true to our State as long as we lived." Following the ceremony, there was a big family gathering, including Monika's godparents. She says there were Christians in East Germany, "but not in my little world."

Monika's world changed when her mother took a job some distance away and left Monika with her grandparents for three years. "My grandmother became the dearest person in my life," she says. Because she was living with her father's parents, there was some contact with her father in Canada. Eventually, the family planned that Monika would join her father after she finished primary school.

But there was another step along the way. Monika was reunited with her mother and sister in 1959. Then all three of them fled East Germany via train through the western sector of Berlin. They lived in several refugee camps until her mother and Erika relocated to central Germany. Monika worked as a live-in maid in Hamburg, waiting for funds to join her father in Canada.

Confessions OF FAITH



DISCOVERING HER SAVIOR IN CANADA

Monika's adventure in Canada began in 1962. "My father had a new family there, including a half-brother and sister. There was a homestead with some animals and there was snow up to the roof which lasted until May," she says. "My brother and I hunted rabbits in the bush behind the homestead, and we rode old Goldie bareback, because there was no saddle and only a rope for a bridle."

Monika's father also had a young neighbor, Fred, who "was like a son to him." Fred was working in a gold mine in Yellow Knife when Monika first arrived, but once they met, "there was no doubt in our minds that we would marry," says Monika. Fred's Lutheran family "gently nudged" Monika to take classes at their church. "So this little communist was enrolled in confirmation instruction, and the Holy Spirit continued the work he had begun," she says.

In 1963, Fred and Monika were married, and by 1971 they had been blessed with four children: Ingrid, Stephanie, Donovan, and Byron. "Although we had our babies baptized, it wasn't until a concerned neighbor asked us to bring our children to Sunday school that we began attending a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod church in our small town," says Monika. They quickly got involved in church—Fred becoming a church council member and Monika a

Sunday school teacher—and it became an integral part of the family's life.

Monika recounts, "God blessed us so richly. We were able to purchase a fuel agency, worked hard, and were involved in our community and church. Our children grew up in the relative safety of a small village. [We had] a large family and good friends."

In 1982, they pursued an opportunity to serve a Lutheran mission in Ghana, West Africa, leaving two of their older children behind. At the end of 1989 they returned and settled in British Columbia. The Weihmanns' children who had remained in Alberta had families of their own and were introduced to a WELS church. "Because they could not agree with the other synod's practices, they all became WELS members," Monika says. Monika and Fred were also compelled to leave their church as "the church situation deteriorated more and more" and joined WELS in 1994.

The closest WELS church is in Washington, two and a half hours away, but the Weihmanns are members at St. Peter, St. Albert, Alberta, where their family lives. "Every Sunday we join them via livestreaming, and at Christmas and Easter we drive the thousand kilometers to be together," says Monika. "It is not an ideal situation for us here. We do miss the fellowship of believers, but all of our unchurched friends give



Monika and Fred Weihmann

us the opportunity to practice Christian charity and love as well as serious witnessing during our home devotions and conversations."

A family favorite Bible passage is this: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). As Monika reflects on God's guidance in her life and considers the Reformation's anniversary from her unique perspective, she says, "God's Word in its truth and purity has survived these many years and will continue until the Lord puts an end to this world. There may never be another Luther, but thank God there are still many Lutherans!"

Ann Ponath is a member at Christ, North Saint Paul, Minnesota.



There are times when things are so engrained in our life that we take them for granted and struggle to even explain them. I think being a Lutheran can be like that—especially for us “lif-ers.” That’s one of the reasons I love reading the “Confessions of faith” articles shared in FIC each month (p.14). It’s refreshing to hear from those who are new to Lutheranism, to be reminded of the treasures that Martin Luther restored to the church. Reading the perspectives of the two Lutheran dads featured here helped me too.

Want more resources to help teach Reformation truths to your children? Visit nph.net and consider a new short film titled “God’s Plan for Luther and Me”; the book “Martin Luther: A Man Who Changed The World”; or the graphic novels on Katie and Martin Luther.

Nicole Balza

Join the conversation!

Visit wels.net/forwardinchrist and look for the *Heart to heart* link.

WHAT SHOULD WE TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT THE REFORMATION?

When it comes to teaching our children about the Reformation, especially our young children, we have to admit the challenge of it. Perhaps the most obvious challenge is that the official date for recognizing the Reformation is Oct. 31. There is a part of me that wishes that Martin Luther would have had some foresight with his choosing of a date! Didn’t he know that this would become Halloween and that children would be hopelessly distracted? I am thinking that it probably isn’t enough to dress up your children as Martin Luther to help them understand the joy of the Reformation.

In addition, the Reformation isn’t just competing with Halloween. It’s also competing with Martin Luther King Jr. Day. My daughter, Tayley, came home from public school on Martin Luther King Jr. Day impressed in ways that I rarely see, trying to tell me the story of the civil rights movement. In fact, she is having the hardest time accepting that Martin Luther King Jr. was named after another Martin Luther, who was even greater.

With that said, perhaps the greatest challenge in teaching our children about the Reformation is explaining the truths themselves. Most of the key ideas are framed by Latin slogans or *solas*. Whoever decided to frame the Reformation in this way didn’t have children in mind. What is

Would you like to tell your children a story this Halloween? The 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation gives you that chance.

You can tell the story of a young man bothered by the practice of paying off sin’s punishment with money. You can tell the story of a young man who was brave. He didn’t keep his mouth shut, even before those older than he, because he cared about their souls. You can tell the story of a young man who cared about God’s truth, wanting to understand what true repentance meant and wanting the leaders of the church to treasure God’s grace. It is an amazing Halloween story, the posting of 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on Oct. 31, 1517.

There is a story to tell. But that story didn’t end on Oct. 31 five hundred years ago. There is a continuing story you can tell every day you are with your children. In fact, you get to live out the story. On each of your days, you have the chance to put on display divine Reformation truths that are at the heart of our salvation—grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone.

We all know these Reformation concepts. Yet as parents, it is easy to live something other than grace and faith and Scripture. When a child has sinned, we may forget that any Christian discipline intends to have an ultimate happy ending in the grace of God. In our pride we may overlook

more, if someone challenged us Lutherans to put the Reformation itself into a single sentence, we might say, “The Reformation was all about the Bible’s teaching that we are justified by grace through faith by Christ alone.” Try teaching that to your six-year-old!

The ideas of the Reformation are saving and powerful, but they are also abstract. Somewhere along the line, I remember learning that kids under a certain age simply cannot grasp abstract concepts. For parents wanting to teach their children about the Reformation, these are the challenges.

I’ll tell you what I am going to do with my kids to meet the challenge. **I am going to teach my kids about the Reformation during the entire month of October. Really, whenever it comes up in daily life, we are going to talk about it.** I am going to buy a children’s book from Northwestern Publishing House. There’s one called *Martin Luther: A Man Who Changed The World* that looks especially good, but I’ll look into other possibilities as well. We will talk about the different “Martins” and why Oct. 31 is special to us for better reasons than candy.

But what about the truths of the Reformation? How can we share abstract truths with them in meaningful ways? We will let Luther guide us with Scripture. His first thesis, which guided the other 94 theses, stated, “When our Lord and

Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ [Matthew 4:17] he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.” This is where everything started. Luther wanted the world to know that the life of a believer has two parts: 1) contrition or sorrow over sin and 2) faith in the saving life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. These are actually pretty simple concepts to understand. That’s what I intend to teach my girls.

I am going to teach them to apologize to each other and to their God. I am going to hold his law in front of them and show them their sin. Then, I will show them their Savior who died for them. I will speak to them of Jesus’ love and grace and about how forgiven and washed and loved they really are. I probably won’t even call it *repentance*. They will learn that word later, but they will learn about Jesus. That’s really my number one goal.

Even if they never do come to know with great clarity the difference between Martin Luther and Martin Luther King Jr., I want them to know Jesus. That, after all, is what the Reformation is all about.

Timothy Bourman is a pastor at Sure Foundation in Queens, New York, and co-host of the podcast Project 1517. He and his wife, Amanda, have three young daughters.



the reality of our absolute dependence on God, the centrality of faith for eternal life and for every other moment in life. In the busyness of life, we may speak of Scripture’s importance but let its priority slip. We may speak a story of Reformation when the anniversary hits, but sometimes it’s hard to live out the Reformation during those many moments God gives us with young, precious souls.

Being a parent means knowing sin and God’s forgiveness. That’s a Reformation truth. There are times when we sin against our child by assuming the worst and thinking they had done the very thing we had warned them against, only to find out that we were wrong. Can you look your child in the eye and tell him you are sorry, explain that you have a sinful flesh too, and ask him to forgive you? There is no greater joy than to hear a representative of Christ, at the young age of seven, smile and forgive.

There’s another side of that knowledge. Your child sins, and she is sitting on the couch in the basement in a timeout. After some screaming and crying there is silence, and then a very different voice rises up the stairs: “I’m sorry.” Can you walk down the stairs and have the first words from your mouth be, “I forgive you, and Jesus forgives you too”? Yes, parents can offer guidelines and loving consequences after assuring their child of forgiveness, but we don’t want the threats to replace forgiveness and only say, “Don’t let that ever happen again.” Those little souls can be tricked by the devil; they can be

crushed when God’s love is withheld. You don’t want to do that. I don’t want to do that. We know how precious God’s love has been to us. Shower his grace on those you love.

Being a parent means depending on someone else for your salvation and for every other challenge in life. Can you humbly commiserate with your children? Can you agree with them that we are all weak and we do not have the power to obey as we want? Can you mourn with them over their wicked flesh, but then can you give them hope as you remind them that our peace when we disobey and our power finally to obey comes not from ourselves but from our God? We depend. We trust. By God’s grace, we believe. Faith—that’s a Reformation truth.

Being a parent means listening with your children to words that come from a God whose word made the world and raised the dead. Bible stories are powerful words. The truths of those stories are power to rebuke, to comfort, to guide. Read God’s stories. Talk about God’s stories. Have Scripture be a daily meal in your home—that’s a Reformation truth.

There is a Reformation story to tell. Do speak of Luther’s Reformation. But even more, make the Reformation—by God’s grace and power—your daily beating heart.

Stephen Geiger is a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin. He and his wife, Anna, have six children ranging in age from 1 to 10.



Maintaining the faith in a secular college

Secular colleges engulf WELS students in new, even unchristian, ideas—but students shouldn't be afraid.

Richard Wilkosz

Martin Luther went to college to become a lawyer, but that changed. Take note, students and your worried parents: The imminent change of the college experience can be a blessing.

Suddenly, in just one semester, you already may be rethinking your career path, political views, and more.

Young adulthood is tumultuous—a typical undergraduate student switches majors three times. What else could you expect from so much discovery about the world and your place in it? Family and friends may not always understand or approve—Luther's father fumed when his son left law school for monkhood—but do not focus on a growing distance between you and those who love you and watched you grow up. Focus on the faith that still binds you together.

Christianity has always appealed to diverse people, starting with the apostles. Simon the Zealot was part of a movement to overthrow the Roman government. Matthew was a Roman employee. Did they agree on earthly issues? Yet they were united by Christ's heavenly mission. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Earthly differences and changes do not have to send ripples over your unshaking citizenship in that kingdom.

It's not a sin to hear someone out who thinks differently.

In fact, Peter writes, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). "Everyone" has no exception—those of other faiths, those who deny God, and those without firm beliefs. Using "gentleness and respect" is to first listen—really listen. The skill is difficult to learn but necessary to have.

Fortunately, you have every chance to practice. Secular colleges exchange as many ideas as they can cram into one place. Participate in the discussions. When listening, you gain valuable new perspectives. When speaking, you have the blessed opportunity to share Jesus.

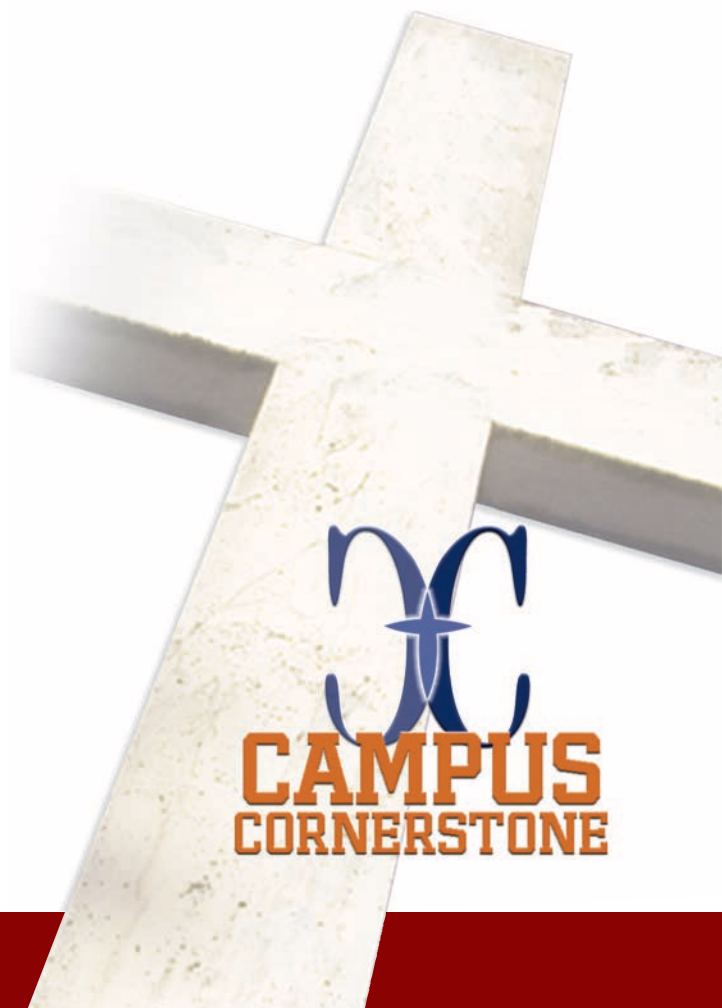
Empathy is the key. See it in Paul where he writes, "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. . . . To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law). . . . I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:20-22).

Now see how he put it in practice. Paul listened before saying, "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at

your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you" (Acts 17:22,23). Paul learned about the Athenians. His message then became personal and compelling enough to convert new followers in a place overflowing with gods and strange beliefs.

Luther listened as well. He studied the classical philosophers, the Catholic Church of his time, and the Bible itself. Some sources confirmed his faith; others did not. Those new and different voices only helped inform his own personal, compelling message of faith. You can do the same, while at the same time declaring with Luther, "Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen."

Richard Wilkosz, a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, is a member at Redeemer, Weston, Wisconsin.



CHANGES IN MINISTRY

Pastors

Arndt, Kenneth, to retirement
Arndt, Shaun, to Peace, Sun Prairie, Wis.
Bitter, Lucas, to Atlanta Mission, Intown, Ga.
Bode, David, to retirement
Bolda, James, to retirement
Coleman, Brady, to Siloah, Milwaukee, Wis.
Endorf, David, to St. John, Sparta, Wis.
Free, Joel, to St. Paul, Ixonia, Wis.
Gumm, Thomas, to retirement
Jenkins, Paul, to Our Savior, Springville, N.Y.
Kolander, Jonathan, to St. Mark's, Citrus Heights, Calif.
Leyrer, Peter, to Risen Savior, Milwaukee, Wis.
Lor, Ger, to Grace Hmong, Kansas City, Kan.
Luchterhand, Lyle, to retirement
Naumann, Thomas, to retirement
Peil, Tyler, to Prince of Peace, Salt Lake City, Utah
Schmidt, Brian, to Trinity, Caledonia, Wis.
Sordahl, Myron, to retirement
Steinberg, Paul, to Chaplains in Schools Inc., Milwaukee, Wis.
Wendland, Robert, to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
Willitz, Joel, to Grace, Wausau, Wis.

Teachers

Backus, Greta, to Shepherd of the Valley, Menasha, Wis.
Balfour, Alysia, to St. Luke, Oakfield, Wis.
Bartelt, Jill, to St. John, Lannon, Wis.
Bigelow, Melinda, to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
Brohn, Katrina, to Morning Star, Jackson, Wis.
Drake, Deborah, to Bethany, Hustisford, Wis.
Durkee, Elytta, to retirement
Faust, Lauren, to St. John, Lannon, Wis.
Foelske, Alexa, to Cross of Glory, Peoria, Ariz.
Frederickson, Connie, to St. Paul Lutheran Child Center, Winneconne, Wis.
Goodgre, Janice, to retirement
Graf, Wendy, to St. Paul, East Troy, Wis.
Huff, Stephanie, to St. John, Caledonia, Minn.
Lautz, Morgan, to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.
Lee, Ruth, to Trinity, Belle Plaine, Minn.
Lendt, Cindy, to Good Shepherd, Burnsville, Minn.
Menges, David, to retirement
Menges, Nate, to Cross of Christ, Coon Rapids, Minn.
Millner, Roseanne, to God's Treasures Child Care, Winthrop, Minn.
Noack, David, to Crown of Life, West Saint Paul, Minn.

Obermiller, Greg, to St. John, Lomira, Wis.
Phillips, Ashley, to St. Matthew, Janesville, Wis.
Prater, Megan, to St. Paul, Fort Atkinson, Wis.
Resop, Alison, to Mt. Lebanon, Milwaukee, Wis.
Riddle, Elijah, to St. Marcus, Milwaukee, Wis.
Roth, Michelle, to Zion, Monroe, Mich.
Schmitz, Susan, to Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Scott, Lynette, to retirement
Spurgin, Alan, to retirement
Stellick, Douglas, to St. John's, Pardeeville, Wis.
Thiesfeldt, Jeremy, to Redeemer, Fond du Lac, Wis.
Travis, Linda, to retirement
Ungemach, Anna, to St. Peter, Appleton, Wis.
Vieths, Judith, to retirement
Vogt, Angela, to St. John, Manitowoc, Wis.

Staff minister

Mueller, Rebekah, to Divine Savior, Doral, Fla.

ANNIVERSARIES

Appleton, Wis.—St. Paul (150). Oct. 1. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; refreshments/displays in between services. 920-733-6701; office@stpaulappletonwi.com.
Eau Claire, Wis.—St. Mark (50). Oct. 1. Worship, 8 & 10:30 A.M.; meal and program, 12:30 P.M. Website, stmark-wels.org.
Temecula, Calif.—Christ the Vine (25). Oct. 1. Worship, 4 P.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. CTV25th@gmail.com; 951-699-8463.
Alpine, Calif.—Alpine (60). Oct. 15. Worship, 3 P.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested by Oct. 1. 619-201-3923.
Minneapolis, Minn.—St. John (150). Oct. 15. Worship, 10 A.M. 612-379-4296.
Portage, Mich.—St. James (50). Oct. 15. Worship, 9:30 A.M.; potluck, 11:30 A.M. 269-327-4980.
Wausau, Wis.—Our Savior's (75). Oct. 15. Worship, 10 A.M.; meal to follow. RSVP requested. 715-845-3253; pastor.edwards@oursaviorswausau.org.

COMING EVENTS

Reformation 500 celebrations—Many districts are holding area Reformation 500 worship services. Check out dates, times, and locations at wels.net/reformation500.
Organization of WELS Lutheran Seniors convention—Oct. 9–12. Country Springs Hotel, Pewaukee, Wis. Website, wels.net/events.
Evening for Life & Life Luncheon—Oct. 13. Luncheon, 11 A.M.–2 P.M.; dinner, 5:30–8:30 P.M. Country Springs Hotel, Pewau-

kee, Wis. Registration required. Website, EveningForLife.org. Contact@ALife2.com.
Lutheran Music Festival—Oct. 14. Chenery Auditorium, Kalamazoo, Mich. Website, lutheranmusicfestival.com.

MLC Ladies' Auxiliary annual meeting—Oct. 14. 8 A.M. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn. Website, mlc-wels.edu/ladies-auxiliary.

Celebration of Life—Nov. 4. Host: Christian Life Resources. Kettle Moraine Lutheran High School, Jackson, Wis. Theme, "Our Legacy of Life." Register at clrevents.com.

WELS National Choral Festival—Nov. 10–12. 50th anniversary. Host: Luther High School, Onalaska, Wis. Pops concert, Nov. 10, 7 P.M. Sacred concert, Nov. 12, 2 P.M. La Crosse Center Main Arena, 300 Harborview Plaza, La Crosse, Wis. Website, welsfinearts.org.

Women's retreat—Nov. 11. David's Star, Jackson, Wis. Website, davidstar.org.

Concert—Nov. 26. 2 & 4:30 P.M. The Lutheran Chorale of Milwaukee. Abiding Word, Milwaukee, Wis. Theme, "Prelude to Christmas." Mary Prange, 414-861-7092.

Live nativity—Dec. 1–2. 6–8 P.M. Christ, Eagle River, Wis. Presentations run every 20 minutes. 715-479-8307.

Live nativity—Dec. 3. 4–7 P.M. Martin Luther, Oshkosh, Wis. Presented in "drive-through" fashion. Website, martinlutheroshkosh.com/events/live-nativity.

WELS Day at Ford Field—Dec. 16. 4:30 P.M. Ford Field, Detroit, Mich. Detroit Lions vs. Chicago Bears. Lucas Schroeder, 313-262-2164; lucas.schroeder@lions.nfl.net. Tickets, detroitlions.com/wels.

NAMES WANTED

Boston, Mass.—WELS members or people living in the area. New outreach. David Meyer, revdmeyer@gmail.com; 508-761-5051.

College students—Register college students with WELS Campus Ministry for free helpful materials, including *Forward in Christ* magazine and *Meditations*. Website, wels.net/campus-ministry.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Musicians—Guitarist or keyboardist needed to lead worship at The Vine Church, a new mission church in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Short term or long term. Kevin Schultz, 208-449-2080; Pastor@TheVineIdaho.org.

Find additional community events and resources at **welsrc.net**. To place an announcement, call 414-256-3210; bulletinboard@wels.net. Deadline is eight weeks before publication date.



Synod convention celebrates our great heritage

From the opening hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”—complete with a 45-voice choir, instruments, and organ—to the closing anthem “God’s Word Is Our Great Heritage” sung acapella three days later, the 64th biennial convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod highlighted the blessings of our Lutheran heritage.

More than 400 delegates and advisors attended the convention, held July 31–Aug. 3 at Luther Preparatory School, Wauwatertown, Wis. The convention theme, “Our Great Heritage,” connects with the important anniversary confessional Lutherans are celebrating in 2017—the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation.

In the opening President’s Report, WELS President Mark Schroeder stressed the importance of the blessings God gave to the church through Martin Luther and the

faithful witnesses that followed him. “We can’t help but thank God or the many blessings that God has passed down through the generations to us,” he says. “It’s a rich and priceless inheritance—not of money or property but of the truth of his Word and the life-giving power of the gospel. It’s a heritage that has been treasured, protected, and preserved, and which has now been entrusted to us. It’s a heritage for us to defend and hold on to, so that we can share it with others now and with generations to come.”

Daily devotions reflected on the three *solas* of the Reformation, grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone. John Brenner, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis., also presented an essay entitled “God’s Word is our great heritage,” which focused on one of the teachings brought back to the light by the Reformation: The Bible is the totally inspired and inerrant Word of God.

LEARNING ABOUT WORK BEING DONE

Reports from WELS areas of ministry shared how WELS is working to spread this ageless, unchanging gospel message.

- Larry Schlomer, administrator of WELS World Missions, gave an overview of expanding gospel-outreach opportunities around the world. He reported that since the last synod convention in 2015, WELS has made contact with and been involved in some capacity with 14 new mission fields around the world. Now WELS works with close to 50 world fields, ranging from places where WELS sends missionaries to locales with contacts from national churches to groups that are using materials from Multi-Language Publications. Delegates also heard firsthand about world mission work from missionaries who live in Africa, Russia, and East Asia.
- Outreach opportunities in the United States and Canada were also highlighted—including new and enhanced ministries started in 2017 in places such as Waukegan, Ill.; Hendersonville, N.C.; and Milwaukee, Wis. Keith Free, administrator of WELS Home Missions, also underscored grow-

ing cross-cultural ministries to the Hmong, Sudanese, Vietnamese, and Spanish-speaking populations.

- Training called workers to preach and teach is an important part of preserving our heritage. Paul Prange, administrator of WELS Ministerial Education, talked about quality and quantity of workers as he looked at the ministries of the four ministerial education schools—Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Mich.; Luther Preparatory School, Wauwatertown, Wis.; Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.; and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
- Representatives from Congregational Services shared updates on resources and information that can help congregations in the areas of outreach, education, discipleship, worship, and member assistance. A special report from Jonathan Hein, director of the WELS Commission on Congregational Counseling, highlighted key findings from a comprehensive demographic survey of WELS conducted over the past two years. (Learn more about these findings and future plans in the November *WELS Connection* and FIC.)

HIGHLIGHTING REFORMATION 500

Celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation continued with presentations that highlighted Reformation history as well as shared materials and ways for congregations and individuals to celebrate the Reformation.

Michael Herbst, vice president of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK) in Germany, was a special guest of the convention and shared more about the history of our sister church and how the ELFK continues to reach out in the land of the Reformation (see p. 24).

Herbst was not the only special guest at the convention. Representatives came from three Lutheran church bodies with whom WELS declared fellowship during the convention: the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia; South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (Hong Kong); and East Asia Lutheran Synod (see more on p. 23). Guests from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod also attended.

John Braun, chairman of the Reformation 500 Committee, reported on avail-



able Reformation 500 resources, including Bible studies and a children's film taken from the Luther film, *A Return to Grace: Luther's Life and Legacy*. Delegates were treated to a viewing of *A Return to Grace*, which included a question-and-answer period with the film's executive producer, Steve Boettcher, and author of the companion book *Luther's Protest*, John Braun.

To celebrate the anniversary, the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) decided to prepare a new "Ninety-Five Theses for the 21st century." Fifteen pastors from around the world put together the document, which was approved by the CELC at its triennial convention in Grimma, Germany, this past summer. A video of confessional Lutherans from around the world reading some of these theses was shown to the delegates.

Go to wels.net/2017synodconvention to read the President's report and the essay, to view presentations, to look at photos, and to watch news videos filmed at the convention.

(Clockwise from top): (1) More than 700 delegates and members from local congregations attended the opening worship service at St. Mark's, Watertown, Wis. (2) Todd Poppe (right), WELS chief financial officer, and President Mark Schroeder marked the retirement of the synod's debt by shredding a copy of the debt statement. Two years ago, the synod in convention voted to launch a campaign to retire the debt early. Through God's grace, the debt was paid off a year and a half ahead of schedule. (3) Special common chests were built by Kevin Kopplin, a member of Lord of Life, DeForest, Wis., to show how Lutherans financed their needs following the separation from the Roman Church during Luther's time. The chests were used to collect offerings during the convention. (4) Three hundred sixty-five voting delegates attended the 2017 synod convention, including 106 pastors, 4 world missionaries, 70 teachers, 6 staff ministers, and 179 lay delegates. An additional 54 advisory delegates and 10 special guests attended. (5) Professors and staff from Luther Preparatory School helped coordinate the convention. These children served as pages during the convention.



Convention resolutions set direction for the future

During the convention, 21 floor committees met to consider information that pertained to their assigned area of ministry and to offer reports and resolutions to the convention floor that will set the course for the next biennium.

Delegates adopted the resolution approving the Synodical Council's proposed ministry financial plan (budget). This plan keeps WELS on solid financial ground, but, according to Todd Poppe, WELS' chief financial officer, near-flat Congregation Mission Offerings and increasing costs could make it difficult to maintain ministries beyond this biennium. The Synodical Council authorized a greater use of reserve funds to maintain ministry for 2017–19.

Delegates did express some concern about the amount of support for the Board for Ministerial Education, particularly for Martin Luther College (MLC), New Ulm, Minn. The amount of debt for Martin Luther College graduates has been an issue of concern in recent years. Other delegates noted that adding support to one area of ministry means that support would need to be removed from another area.

The Synodical Council's unfunded priority list, ministries that could take place if resources are available, was also adopted. Some of the prioritized min-

istry programs not in the current ministry financial plan include Publication Coordinating Commission theological works, more new Home Mission starts, enhancement of World Missions, financial assistance to MLC students, another Christian giving counselor, capital projects at ministerial education schools, and support to various Congregational Services ministries like Military Services and Prison Ministry.

A resolution to support the synod's new long-range plan was adopted. Titled "Our Great Heritage," this plan will help guide the work that WELS will undertake from 2018–25.

Delegates adopted a resolution that will constitutionally change the name of the Congregation and Ministry Support Group to Congregational Services. The Congregation and Ministry Support Group recommended the change because it wanted a shorter and more memorable name that better communicates the central mission of the commission.

Recommendations of the Compensation Review Committee were reviewed and adopted by delegates. The 2015 synod in convention called for a thorough review of the WELS Compensation Guidelines. The Compensation Review Committee of the Synodical

Council recommended only slight modifications to the current guidelines but also worked on repackaging the guidelines to make them easier to apply. Read more on p. 23.

Discussion ensued when a resolution was presented to require all early childhood and Lutheran elementary schools to require a \$7.50 annual fee per student and all high schools to pay a \$4.00 annual fee per student to help support the work of the Commission on Lutheran Schools. Since 2007, schools have been encouraged to give a voluntary supplemental contribution to assist with Lutheran Schools' operating costs. The motion was defeated. A motion did subsequently pass urging delegates to "strongly encourage all of their schools to participate in the voluntary supplemental contribution."

Synod leaders now will move forward during the next biennium to carry out the direction that was supported by convention delegates. The next synod convention will be held in 2019 at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn.

Read all the convention reports and resolutions at wels.net/2017synodconvention. There you will also find the 2017 *Book of Reports and Memorials*, which contains details on the long-range plan, the ministry financial plan, and more.



Left to right: (1) Prof. Earle Treptow, chairman of the Compensation Review Committee, presented the committee's recommendations to delegates, including a demonstration of a new compensation calculator. Find the calculator at welsrc.net/human-resources. (2) Delegates discussed convention business, which included reports from the synod's areas of ministry and resolutions and reports brought by each convention floor committee. (3) Delegates made comments and asked questions on several of the resolutions presented at the convention.

A growing Lutheran family

The synod in convention had the joy of officially welcoming three Lutheran synods from around the world into fellowship. Representing the synods at the convention were Rev. Dr. Kebede Yigezu from the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia (LCE), Rev. Titus Tse from South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission (SALEM) in Hong Kong, and two other pastors (**location removed for security concerns**).

Kebede founded the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia in 2012 and, at the same time, added a seminary so that he can teach other Christian pastors, in addition to Lutheran pastors, the pure Word of God. Today, the Lutheran Church of Ethiopia has nearly 400 members and has already seen graduates from its seminary. Kebede says the declaration of fellowship is a historic moment for the LCE. "It is meaningful for us because faithfulness to Scripture is a very important matter of life and death. Jesus says 'If you hold to my teaching . . .' So, faithful-ness to what he says, what the Scriptures say from Genesis chapter 1 to the last chapter of Revelation, is very important. We are very happy because we know that WELS is faithful to the Scriptures and is a confessional Lutheran church."

Founded in 1977, SALEM has 10 congregations and six pastors. The synod's history is tied closely to World Missions and, more recently, to Asia Lutheran Seminary, the WELS ministerial training school located in Hong Kong. Tse says, "We recognize that it's important that we're

Bible study is an important part of compensation guidelines

One of the important issues coming in front of delegates at the 2017 convention was a set of revised compensation guidelines put together by the Compensation Review Committee to help calling bodies determine adequate compensation for their called workers. The delegates adopted the guidelines through a resolution put together by Floor Committee #8.

But Michael Woldt, pastor at David's Star, Jackson, Wis., and chairman of that floor committee, says the numbers and guidelines and new compensation calculator were only part of his committee's discussion. "The message that the floor committee really wanted to get out was not just adopting the calculator and guidelines but looking at the Bible study and the prayerful, thoughtful approach to compensation

as the most important element and the starting point," he says.

The compensation guidelines begin with a Bible study that explores the guidance God's Word gives about what compensation full-time called workers should receive. In a report presented to the convention, Floor Committee #8 wrote, "Special thanks is given for the Bible study portion of the report. We strongly encourage all calling bodies to review this Bible study on a regular basis." The report also noted that the Compensation Review Committee is planning future Bible studies and instructional videos related to called worker compensation issues.

Says Woldt, "The calculator is not where you start. . . . You start with the Bible study and make that front and center."



Image removed for security concerns.

keeping the faith, and we can share with future generations the importance of keeping the faith because of this relationship with WELS, a church that shares our faith."

To learn more about WELS' sister synods, visit celc.info.

The report also included one final note: "No guidelines or resources, no matter how well-crafted, will ever eliminate selfishness, greed, or discontent in the hearts of those serving in the public ministry or in the lives of those being served by faithful ministers of the gospel. That is the work of the Spirit. No guidelines or resources, no matter how well-crafted, will ever provide the financial means for struggling congregations to compensate their called workers according to synodical guidelines. That too is the work of the Spirit as God's people grow in the grace of giving."

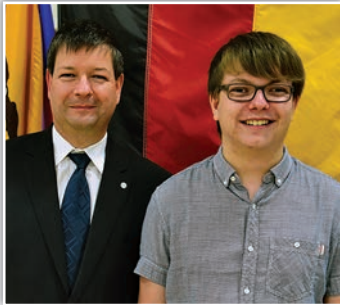
The compensation guidelines and calculator as well as a new video Bible study presented by Prof. Earle Treptow, chairman of the Compensation Review Committee, are now available online at welsrc.net/human-resources.



Spreading the Word in Germany

Being able to speak in “one voice”—a voice that shares the pure law and gospel message—is something Michael Herbst, pastor at St. Johanneskirche, Zwickau-Planitz, Germany, saw and appreciated at the recent synod convention. Herbst and his son, Daniel, represented the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church

(ELFK) in Germany at the WELS convention during this 500th anniversary year of the Reformation. “It was so good to get the Lord’s Supper together with all of us,” he says, in reference to the opening worship service. “It’s good to see and hear that we are one voice.”



Michael Herbst and his son Daniel.

That fellowship with WELS and other sister churches in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference means much to the 1,250-member German church body, especially be-

cause many people in their country don’t want to hear the gospel message. According to Herbst, while many claim to be members of the State Church (a mix of Lutheranism, Reformed, and United Protestant) or the Catholic Church, they are not really interested in attending. And the message they hear from these churches can range from moderately conservative to extremely liberal. The State Church waters down the law and is tolerant of anything that is preached. “I have to say first [that people] are lost because they are sinners, but that is not the message in the State churches,” says Herbst.

But the 16 ELFK congregations are not afraid to share the law and gospel, a message Martin Luther stressed, even when many Germans are tired of hearing about the Reformation.

In fact, they are using the Reformation to reach out into their communities. A series of lectures called “*Das Wort hat’s getan*” (the Word did it) will give ELFK pastors an opportunity to share more about Luther’s teachings. Herbst’s congregation is also hosting a synodwide special worship service on Reformation Day for all its congregations and the local community.

Joint gatherings for choirs, youth, brass, and more are not uncommon for the ELFK congregations. The ELFK also runs a large bookstore filled with conservative Lutheran materials and trains called workers in its own seminary in Leipzig. An independent elementary school run by an association of ELFK churches, Dr. Martin Luther School in Zwickau-Planitz, offers an education and the gospel message to many students who are not members.

Challenges still abound. The seminary currently has no students, and outreach is difficult due to many Germans’ indifference to religion. But the ELFK continues to stand firm in the Word in the land of Luther.

Elections

The following individuals were elected at the 2017 synod convention to serve on various boards and commissions:

First vice president

Rev. James Huebner

Recording secretary

Rev. Robert Pasbrig

Synodical Council

Pastors at-large—Rev. Joel Jenswold,

Rev. Jonathan Schroeder

Teacher at-large—Mr. James Moeller

Board for World Missions

Chairman—Rev. Paul Janke

Layman—Mr. Arlin Bornschlegl

Board for Home Missions

Chairman—Rev. Wayne Uhlhorn

Board for Ministerial Education

Chairman—Rev. Duane Rodewald

Teacher or staff minister—Mr. Gerald Zeamer

Laymen—Mr. Paul Hahm, Mr. Dean Waldschmidt

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Governing Board

Chairman—Rev. Jonathan Scharf

Board of Appeals

Pastor—Rev. Joel Leyrer

Teacher or staff minister—Mr. James Moeller

Layman—Mr. Kenneth Gosch

Commission on Evangelism

Chairman—Rev. Donn Dobberstein

Commission on Lutheran Schools

Chairman—Mr. James Sievert

Northwestern Publishing House Board of Directors

Parish pastor—Rev. Joel Schroeder

Teacher or staff minister—Mr. Matthew Groth

Laymen—Mr. Joel Raasch, Mr. Edward Wolf



The synod’s officers are (from left): Mark Schroeder, president; James Huebner, first vice president; Joel Voss, second vice president; and Robert Pasbrig, secretary. Huebner and Pasbrig were re-elected at this synod convention.

CELEBRATING THE REFORMATION

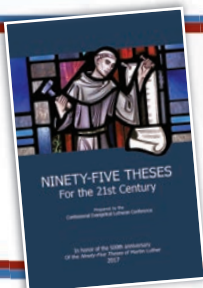
Looking for ways to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation? Here are some suggestions. Go to wels.net/reformation500 for details and more information.

1

SEE the new Martin Luther film, *A Return to Grace: Luther's Life and Legacy*. Marcus Theaters is hosting screenings of the movie in more than 40 cities in eight states at 7 P.M., Oct. 23, 25, and 30. Marcus also will work with local schools and congregations in those areas to set up showings at different dates and times. Can't make it to the theater? You can also preorder your own copy through Northwestern Publishing House.



2



CELEBRATE your shared beliefs with confessional Lutherans around the world by watching a video presentation of leaders from our sister church bodies reading contemporary statements of faith from a new booklet called "Ninety-Five Theses for the 21st Century."

3

ATTEND a Reformation service or event. WELS schools, congregations, circuits, and even districts are holding special events in October and November to celebrate our Lutheran heritage.

How are you celebrating the Reformation? Send your ideas and photos to *Forward in Christ*, N16W23377 Stone Ridge Dr, Waukesha WI 53188; fic@wels.net.

4

JOIN Prof. Joel Otto from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for the next interactive faith online Bible study. Entitled "Luther's Lasting Impact," the study will examine some of Luther's key theological emphases and note how they impacted the life of the church. The study will be streamed Wednesday from Oct. 4–Nov. 8 at 6 and 8 P.M. CT.



5

USE this anniversary as a way to tell your friends and neighbors about the important biblical truths Luther rediscovered. Invite them to learn more at your congregation's Reformation service. Worship resources that highlight the *solas* of the Reformation are available for congregations.

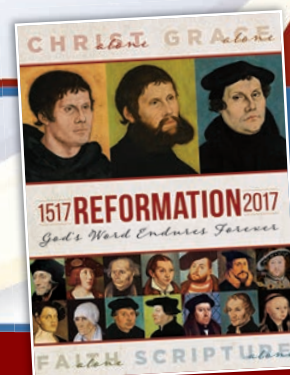
6



READ about Luther and his teachings. Northwestern Publishing House has a wide variety of books available. Make sure to look for the recently released edition of Luther's Catechism to review the basic truths of your faith.

7

REVIEW the Reformation timeline included in this issue to learn more about the development of Lutheranism. Then take an online quiz to see how much you know about the people of the Reformation.



CALLED TO SERVE:

Katharina von Bora Luther



God provided Luther's wife with many different opportunities to serve.

Rebecca DeGarmeaux

In this anniversary year of the Reformation, it is fitting that we should remember Martin Luther. The number of books written about him and his work is second only to those written about Christ himself.

But an often forgotten figure in Reformation history is Martin's industrious wife, Katharina. Because primary sources on her life are scarce, most accounts are fictionalized works that attempt to fill the many gaps in her history. But it is possible to piece together the little that does exist to compile a fairly complete picture. What we have shows her to be an industrious woman, who served in many different roles.

THE NUN

Katharina was born Jan. 20, 1499, to Hans and Katharina von Bora, members of the lower nobility who were little more than poor farmers. When Katharina was only five years old, her mother died. Her father soon remarried, but Katharina never had the chance to become close to her new mother. Perhaps because of financial challenges for the family, Katharina's father soon put her into a convent to ensure that she received a good education. Five years later, she was moved to another convent at Nimbschen near Grimma, where two of her aunts were nuns. She would have learned much from them and the other nuns in the convent.

In the convent, Katharina was a student, then a novice, and finally a nun. All of these roles or vocations required obedience to her teachers and superiors. At that time, becoming a nun meant that she chose the vocation that would assure her of the best chance to please God. The Fourth Commandment was a part of her life. It was also the only life she knew, a factor that would affect some of her decisions as she grew.

But then things changed. Martin Luther's writings found their way into the convent. She and her fellow nuns soon realized that their vows had been made under false pretenses and were not valid. Luther taught that all vocations were equal before God. When the nuns at Nimbschen realized that God did not need their vows and works, they decided to leave the convent. Under cover of darkness on Easter Eve, April 4, 1523, they left in an empty wagon used to deliver herring to the convent.

THE WIFE AND HOUSEHOLD MANAGER

Once they came to Wittenberg, life changed dramatically for Katharina and her friends. Some were able to return to their families; some quickly found husbands. Some lived and worked in influential homes in Wittenberg, as Katharina did, first with Mayor Reichenbach and later with the artist and entrepreneur Lucas Cranach.

Perhaps while living in the Cranach home, she met the young nobleman Jerome Baumgartner. Their relationship blossomed. But although many in Wittenberg presumed that the two would marry, Jerome went home to his family and never came back. It seemed likely that Katharina would remain unmarried, a life that was not easy in the 16th century.

Katharina's life did change. Katharina married Martin Luther on June 13, 1525, and she became a wife and mother. But there was more. The Black Cloister, where the Luthers lived, was a large building where she served as cook, housekeeper, head groundskeeper, and manager of her household staff. She oversaw the improvement and expansion of the building, while also running a boarding house for an ever-changing mix of university students, relatives, and friends. Since Martin turned the family finances over to her, she was the family accountant. She was also a farmer who bought and improved several plots of land where she raised a significant portion of the food for her family, renters, and guests. She embraced every opportunity to serve God in each role.

THE MOTHER AND NURSE

Motherhood brought both great joy and great sorrow to Katharina. She and Martin were blessed with six children, three boys and three girls. Two of the girls died young. Elisabeth was only eight months old, and Magdalena was twelve years old. Katharina also suffered a miscarriage, which left her ill for several months.

Both Martin and Katharina loved and cherished their children and understood the importance of being parents. In fact, Martin made the unprecedented move of naming Katharina as the children's guardian in his will. The Luthers' remaining four children, Hans, Martin, Paul, and Margaretha, all married but not until after both of their parents had died. All but Martin had children of their own, and descendants of Paul and Margaretha survive to this day.

While in the convent Katharina learned what it meant to be a nurse. Her Aunt Magdalena had been in charge of the convent dispensary and later moved in with the Luthers. Katharina used her nursing knowledge when Martin suffered from numerous digestive problems as well as when the Luther home was used as an infirmary when the plague came through Wittenberg.

THE WIDOW

Probably the hardest role of Katharina's life was that of widow. After Martin died on Feb. 18, 1546, she found

herself oppressed by both friends and foes. Martin's will, leaving everything to her and naming her as guardian for the children, was challenged as unlawful. Yet with the help of a few friends and through her strong-willed determination, Katharina hung on to that which was hers. When war and plague came through Wittenberg, she repeatedly left the city for the safety of her children but also returned to rebuild and press on.

It is said that at the end she
confessed, "I will stick to
Christ like a burr on cloth."

In the fall of 1552, the plague forced Katharina to flee Wittenberg one last time. Katharina's destination wasn't clear, but she, Paul, and Margaretha headed toward Torgau. Shortly before they got there, the horses pulling their wagon shied. Katharina jumped from the wagon to steady them but ended up falling into a water-filled ditch. Her children got her to Torgau, where she found herself paralyzed from a combination of the fall and getting drenched. Three months later, on Dec. 20, 1552, she died from her injuries. It is said that at the end she confessed, "I will stick to Christ like a burr on cloth."

Because the plague was still raging in Wittenberg, most thought it unsafe to take Katharina's body back for burial. She was buried at St. Mary's church in Torgau, just a few blocks from the house where she lived her last few months. Her grave and marker are still there today.

Throughout her life, Katharina Luther was a student of the Bible. She rose at 4 A.M. every morning to begin her day with devotion and prayer, earning her the nickname "Morning Star of Wittenberg." She learned that it was not necessary to hide away in a convent to live a God-pleasing life and that her daily duties of wife, mother, housekeeper, landlady, farmer, and many others were godly vocations.

May this be her legacy among us today.

Rebecca DeGarmeaux, director of the ELS Ottesen Museum, is a member at the Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation Mount Olive, Mankato, Minnesota.



FAR-REACHING

As a *Doktor Biblicus*, Doctor of the Bible, Martin Luther influenced the culture of the world around him as well as the church.

First and foremost, Martin Luther returned the church back to the foundation of the Scriptures. We remember grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, and Christ alone.

But Luther's impact stretches beyond his work of advancing the truth of the gospel and the wisdom of Holy Scripture. Luther is considered one of the most historically important people of the last millennium. He was consistently ranked in the top 10 in polls conducted around the year 2000—a reflection of the status he has enjoyed for centuries.

While that kind of press has raised his reputation, it has also blurred his image. By many who measure his impact, he is perceived chiefly as an enlightened visionary, a political pioneer, or a cultural icon. Surely Luther offered perspectives on everything from politics to science to music to education. As an expression of faith, Luther believed that every element of earthly existence should be understood as ordered and ordained by God, who also reconciled the fallen world to himself in Christ. His influence then is both sacred and secular, both direct and indirect.

SOME HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Luther did not set out to become famous or to change the world. He did set out to reform the church—the rest was, in some ways, a byproduct of his role as a reformer. So, as we sift through the interpretations to consider the reach of his influence, we offer a partial list of historical contributions that are related to Luther and the Reformation movement.

Language. Luther is often credited with “standardizing” elements of the German language. His translation of the Bible into German was both a monumental and momentous achievement. Luther communicated the original

languages of the Bible to the German people in a clear, creative, and enduring way. Luther was also a prolific writer—by far the most widely published author of the mid-1500s. An 18th-century German historian said of Luther that he “awakened and unbound the German language.” Luther was in a unique position to influence, promote, and unify the dialect and idiom of public German discourse. With so much of the German that was read both publicly and privately connected to Luther's work as translator or writer, there is no doubt that his impact on the German language was significant.

Education. The Lutheran Reformation was, essentially, an education movement. This thought encompasses both Luther's emphasis on teaching the Christian faith (as through his catechisms) and his promoting of schools in general. In his 1524 treatise *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools* (Luther's Works [LW], Vol. 45, pp. 339–378), Luther strongly advocated that governing authorities support elementary education for both boys and girls. He understood that, under God's provision, education was impartial to gender. Luther perceived the benefits both for the “spiritual and temporal estates”—to train leaders in the church and for governing the state. Luther was conscious of the need to prepare young people to be productive citizens. He saw schools as a means to preserve discipline; order; and, especially, the truths of Scripture.

Scientific investigation. For some, the association of Luther with advancement in the field of science may be surprising. After all, he is often remembered as disapproving of the Copernican heliocentric theory. But Luther actually was quite critical of scholars and theologians who denied the value of scientific investigation. In his commentary on *Ecclesiastes*, he wrote, “It is not an evil thing to investigate the nature and the qualities of things. Besides, the causes and the objects of this world are the most evident of all, far from difficult to know” (LW, Vol. 15, p. 18). He believed that greater discovery would simply disclose the greatness of God. Luther would not have



INFLUENCE

Paul E. Koelpin

avored scientific speculation, but he clearly encouraged closer examination of the universe.

Church/state distinction. Tension and overlap between church and political authority were characteristic of the Middle Ages. Luther experienced firsthand the chaotic consequences of just such confusion and disorder. His study of Scripture led him to conclude that “God has ordained two governments: the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which restrains the unchristian and wicked so that—no thanks to them—they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace” (LW, Vol. 45, p. 91). Luther’s clear distinction between the roles of church and state has enjoyed wide application since he first articulated it in the 1520s—our own American Constitution bears witness to this influence.

Reforming the church
took on a life of its own,
and it shaped more
than just the church.

Because intersection with political authority was unavoidable for Luther, he is linked, often inappropriately, to many of the political movements that emerged after his work of reforming the church. Luther has been variously credited with laying the foundations for modern democracy, initiating modern nationalism, and instigating revolution. It is true that he gave expression to a life of “freedom,” but Luther meant to highlight the kind of freedom we experience when Christ releases us from captivity to sin and guilt—the freedom of the gospel. Christian freedom was not an end in itself; it was, rather, an invitation to serve others in love.

Music. Luther famously said, “Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise” (LW, Vol. 53, p. 323). He was a musician, composer, and arranger who understood the power of music to “comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate” (LW, Vol. 53, p. 323). So much of Luther’s theology has endured through such hymns as his majestic anthem “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (*Christian Worship* [CW] 200), the melodic Christmas carol “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” (CW 38), or the reflective Easter song “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” (CW 161). He transformed worship to include congregational singing as a regular feature of the service. Luther’s emphasis on music set the context for other historically significant Lutheran composers such as J. S. Bach and Felix Mendelssohn.

LONG-LASTING IMPACT

The reform movement that Luther spearheaded changed the 16th-century world in which he lived. For many historians, the “Reformation Era” marks the transition from medieval to modern time. Luther represents a major change or shift in mindset—away from a society dominated by the Roman Catholic Church to a place of greater autonomy, governed more by the dictates of conscience and reason. Reforming the church took on a life of its own, and it shaped more than just the church.

From his lecture stand in Wittenberg and the various pulpits from which he preached to the books and pamphlets that were published under his name, Luther had the advantage of having the title “Doctor.” He was in the role of professor and pastor, someone whose words were meant to influence.

Luther’s words and ideas—shaped by his Christ-centered theology—cast a wide net. They still do.

Paul Koelpin, a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, is a member at St. John, New Ulm.

Lutherans around the world

We asked leaders from sister churches around the world what it means to them to be Lutheran. Here's what they had to say:



"What happened in Jerusalem in the year 33 in the ninth hour when Jesus died on the cross and said, 'It is finished,' and there I was included."

*Rev. Ingvar Adriansson
(Lutheran Confessional Church in Sweden)*



"I think the Lutheran teachings are centered on the Scriptures; grace alone is the center of the Scriptures. So many have to go such a long way to find grace, and some of them do not find it."

Rev. Serhiy Romanyuk (Ukrainian Lutheran Church)



"Being a Lutheran is important because it means everything to me in my life. . . . The heart and center of Lutheranism is telling us that Jesus Christ alone is our Savior and he has done it all. It is all by grace. This is the highest comfort we can have in life and the greatest message we can share with the world."

*Rev. John Moldstad
(Evangelical Lutheran Synod, USA)*



"For me being a Lutheran is important because of the certainty of salvation. I can be certain I'm going to be saved through Christ. If I am to die tonight, I can be certain that God will bring me to heaven."

*Rev. Martin Wilde
(Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, Germany)*



"Being a Lutheran assures me that in spite of everything I am, God made me his. I am his by grace. I belong to him. In a world where it's so hard to determine what's true, God speaks to us in his Word. We know that's true so we can build our life, faith, and future on that."

*Rev. Mark Schroeder
(Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, USA)*



"I know clearly that Christ has done everything for me. I don't need to rely on myself. I can rely on him totally."

Rev. Juhani Viitala (Lutheran Confessional Church in Finland)



"Christ said, 'It is finished.' My salvation is secure. That's what it means to be a Lutheran for me."

*Mr. John Lederhose
(Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia)*



"I don't believe that Luther is my Savior or that everything that Luther ever said is right. I share with Luther his view of salvation, his view of the importance of staying in the Scriptures because it's the Word of God, and his view of salvation by God's grace by faith without works. I share a passion with Luther for Christ."

Rev. Petr Krakora (Czech Evangelical Lutheran Church)



"How cool it is to be Lutheran! Lutheran faith is freedom. You don't have to look to yourself and worry if you have done something wrong. I go to heaven only because of Christ, not because I pray so much or I do so much. But then I want to listen to God's Word and avoid sin. I'm going to heaven because of God's grace. My daughter says, 'Why doesn't everyone believe that? That's so cool.' "

*Rev. Albrecht Hoffmann
(Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, Germany)*

"God's Word is something most precious for me and the proper distinction of law and gospel. For me that shows that I am not able to accomplish what God wants me to accomplish. Jesus Christ accomplished [it] for me. By his grace and the grace given by the Holy Spirit, I can try to lead a God-pleasing life."

*Rev. Dr. Kebede Getachew Yigezu
(Lutheran Church of Ethiopia)*



"[Being] Lutheran is very good for me because I have comfort God saved me. It removes a heavy burden from me because I cannot do everything good. The Lutheran faith tells me I am a good Christian because God saved me by Jesus' love."

*Rev. Alex Wong Yuk Ming
(South Asian Lutheran Evangelical Mission, Hong Kong)*



"I have a close loving relationship with God. He loves me, and I am happy in what God's Son gives to me."

*Rev. Egil Edvardsen
(Lutheran Confessional Church in Norway)*

"So many in our society hear the law and think it will lead them to heaven. It is so important to bring the gospel to our society."

*Rev. Young Ha Kim
(Seoul Lutheran Church, Korea)*



"Lutheran teaching, for me, is an expression of pure biblical evangelical faith in Christ. It is a voice of freedom. We have forgiveness by God's pure mercy, which saves miserable sinners like we are. It's the only voice that makes us free. There is no other teaching that is so liberating—so wonderful—as our gospel. We are new creatures in Christ."

Rev. Ugis Sildegis (Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia)



"Being a Lutheran gives sense to all things in life. I find fulfillment in the vocation that God had given to me. God puts us everywhere we are and gives us the confidence that we are living God's life."

Rev. Artur Villares (Lutheran Church of Portugal)



"Being a Lutheran is knowing that the whole truth in the Bible is centered on Christ: that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. This is the same message that Lutherans have to share with others."

Rev. Jaime Cortez (Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Peru)

"What we learn from the Bible is the salvation that Christ gives us. It is the security that salvation comes through Christ. Being a Lutheran is the happiest thing in my life."

*Rev. Mario Gálvez
(Christian Church of the Lutheran Reformation of the Republic of Chile)*



"The most important thing that makes me proud of being a Lutheran is, first of all, the truth of the Word of God. I feel comfort when I am told I am saved, not because of anything I have done but because of the love of Jesus Christ. That makes me feel very comfortable because nothing can fail in the hands of God."

Rev. Davison Mutentami (Lutheran Church of Central Africa-Zambia)



The church is
in constant need
of reformation
lest it fall
back into
the addiction
Luther opposed.

Semper reformanda

Andrew C. Schroer

Let me tell you a little parable:

An elderly man sat at his kitchen table with his pastor. He had invited his pastor to celebrate with him.

"Raise a glass with me," the elderly man, who was obviously inebriated, said to his pastor. He had been an alcoholic for as long as the pastor had known him.

"I'm celebrating," the old man continued. "Fifty years ago today, I gave up alcohol completely. I was sober for over 25 years of my life. That's something to celebrate!" he exclaimed, as he sloppily sipped his beer. He did not mention the other 25 years he was not so sober.

Right now, Lutheran and Reformed churches around the world are raising their glasses to celebrate. They are singing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." They are remembering Martin Luther. Some are traveling to Germany to see the Reformation sites.

Five hundred years ago, a German monk named Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in an attempt to reform the church.

The Christian church had strayed from the truth of God's Word. Corruption and error abounded. The good news of forgiveness and heaven that Jesus won for all people had been muddled by rules, rites, and regulations that were supposed to earn the gifts God freely gave.

Martin Luther and other reformers sought to bring the church back to God's Word, back to the gospel, back to Jesus.

We are also celebrating the Reformation and our heritage as Lutherans. But we need to be careful. Many of those who are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation are like the elderly alcoholic celebrating his past sobriety with slurred speech and unsteady legs. A number of Lutheran and Reformed churches today are mired in the false teaching and legalism that Luther and the other reformers so strongly opposed. Already in the gener-

ation directly following Luther's death, some of the great reformers began to stray from God's Word.

Throughout the history of the Lutheran church—and really of the Christian church as a whole—there has been a constant need of reform. False teaching and legalism continually rear their ugly heads.

Reformed churches today love to use the Latin phrase "*Ecclesia semper reformanda est*" ("the church is always being reformed"). What they mean is that the Christian church is in constant need of reformation.

Some misuse that phrase to say that the church constantly needs to change its teaching to be relevant to its times. As heirs of the Reformation, we reject that idea and stand firmly on God's never-changing Word and its eternal truths.

Yet, we can understand the phrase correctly. The church is in constant need of reformation lest it fall back into the addiction Luther opposed. As sinful human beings, we need to continually repent of our sins and reform our sinful ways.

In the same way, as a church body, we need to be humble and vigilant. Just because our ancestors were sober 500 years ago, don't think that false teaching and legalism can't worm their way into our churches and pulpits.

Go ahead and celebrate. Thank God for our great heritage. But then stay vigilant. Stay humble. Go back to God's Word. Keep the focus on Jesus. Give God the glory.

That's what reformation is all about.

Contributing editor Andrew Schroer is pastor at Redeemer, Edna, Texas.



MONUMENTS

Lasting Memories

A monument marking the burial of a wife and mother also marks the fulfillment of God's promises.

Samuel C. Degner

The monuments we see most often may be the ones we like the least: a headstone in a cemetery, a plaque on a vault, an urn on a mantel. They are sad reminders of sin's grave consequences.

HOPES UNFULFILLED

When Moses wrote down the Spirit's words in the book of Genesis, he mentioned an old monument in Palestine, one put down by a grieving, but believing, wanderer some four hundred years earlier. It was a simple memorial—just an upright stone—that marked the burial place of Jacob's dear wife Rachel (Genesis 35:20).

Imagine how Jacob felt as he set up that stone. He had fallen in love with Rachel in less than a month. He had worked for his uncle Laban 14 years to make her his bride. She was the mother of Joseph. Tragically, she died giving birth to Benjamin on the journey to Jacob's home.

Often grave markers appear to us as reminders of dashed dreams: a life seemingly cut short by disease or accident, a grandparent that never got to meet a grandchild, a husband whose wife lived alone for many years. Surely, you've felt the bitterness in your heart as you walked away from the headstone or gently set the urn in its place.

However, as Jacob set up this stone over his wife's fresh grave, could it be that his mind was not on hopes unfulfilled but on promises kept?

PROMISES KEPT

This new monument stood not far from Bethel, where Jacob had set up another stone perhaps 30 years earlier.

In fact, he had just stopped there to worship again—and how things had changed since his last visit! The one-time fugitive was heading home. He had made peace with his brother and no longer feared for his life. He was not alone anymore but accompanied by his wives; 12 children (and one soon to be born); and enough flocks, herds, and servants to split into two camps. He even had a new name: Israel. The Lord had kept his word spoken at Bethel years earlier to protect Jacob, bless him, and bring him back. Certainly he would also keep his promise to give Jacob many descendants, who would own the land under the stone and through whom eternal salvation would come to the world. Rachel would live with Jacob—in his heavenly Father's home!

Not many miles from the place where Rachel was laid to rest, another stone would mark a grave. This one was rolled over the opening of the tomb that held Jacob's descendant, Jesus of Nazareth. How his followers who watched it set in its place must have felt the bitterness of their unfulfilled hopes! But this stone didn't stand in place for long; on the third day, an angel rolled it aside. No need for a stone over a vacant tomb!

Jesus' empty grave now stands as its own monument, proof that God has kept his word to us: Our sins are buried and eternal life is ours. His empty tomb also changes our perspective on the graves of those dear to us. Death still brings heartache, but Jesus' resurrection promises life after death for all those who believe in him.

So, the monuments we place near our departed loved ones can serve not as reminders of unmet expectations but as signs pointing to a hope that is sure to be fulfilled.

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This is the sixth article in a nine-part series on Old Testament monuments and what they mean to us today.



Rather than being an idol to whom we give blind reverence, Luther is a signpost, pointing us to the Scriptures and to the message of the Scriptures—Christ.

Christ, the center

Over the past few years, I have grown closer to Luther than I ever imagined. Research, reading, writing, research again, reading more, and writing again have brought Luther into focus more clearly for me than ever before. For that I am grateful. I don't consider myself a Luther expert, but the focus I have acquired is important.

I think that the greatest clarity comes from understanding the central principle Luther found in the Scriptures and on which he stood. It was Christ! He said and wrote as much often.

When he learned that so many of the common people in the churches in Saxony, had “no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine,” he wrote the Small Catechism, which has one of the greatest confessions of his faith in Christ: “I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.” Luther captured the central message of the Bible. For Luther it was never a dry academic principle. Luther wrote personally; he said, “Me.” That’s the beauty of Luther. He points us to Christ because he treasures Christ. We too have come to treasure Christ.

This wasn’t an isolated incident. At home in Wittenberg, boarders, friends, and relatives often joined Luther at the supper table to listen to him and learn. Once he said, “If anybody strays from the center, it is impossible for him to have the circle around him, and he must blunder. The center is Christ” (*Luther’s Works* [LW], Vol. 54, p. 45). Christ and, therefore, faith and forgiveness.

Luther had to struggle to discover the greatness of God’s grace in Christ. He was tormented by his unworthiness before a holy, just, and omnipotent God. When the Holy Spirit opened his eyes and enlightened him, he confessed it

was as if paradise was opened for him. Then the words of Scripture became a clear message of Christ that Luther was not willing to abandon, no matter what the cost.

Perhaps we may consider Luther a kind of idol when we consider all that God brought to pass because of him. But human idols are not perfect, and neither is Luther. He was a sinner whose flaws are easy to discover. But Christ was Luther’s treasure and hope. He said, “The Christian faith differs from other religions in this, that the Christian hopes even in the midst of evils and sins” (LW, Vol. 54, p. 70).

Rather than being an idol to whom we give blind reverence, Luther is a signpost, pointing us to the Scriptures and to the message of the Scriptures—Christ.

In the past few months, I also have read comments by my brothers and sisters in the faith about being Lutheran. A few of those comments are included in this issue. Some of them are in the special insert, and another page shares thoughts from confessional Lutherans around the world (p. 30). As I read all of these comments, I stand in grateful praise to God for what he has done in bringing these believers also to be signposts pointing to Christ. As you read their comments, I suggest you consider how many times they point to the certainty of salvation in Christ.

Not only are they all signposts, but they also are examples that encourage us all to share our faith and to point others to Christ. For Luther, for these believers, for all of us, Christ is the center. Christ is still the message the world desperately needs.

The church is believers in Jesus

Joel D. Otto

In Luther's days, there were differing views about what the church looked like. The Roman Catholic Church considered the one holy church to be the church of Rome. Others, like Anabaptists and even Calvinists, sought a church that was pure in members and ministers. They tried to create a perfect church and community where God's law reigned supreme and everyone was living holy lives. Both views emphasized the outward nature of the church.

Luther went back to Scripture. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). The one holy church is not a visible organization. Instead, the church is made up of people who believe in Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:2). Therefore, God alone knows members of the holy Christian church because only God can see faith in a person's heart (2 Timothy 2:19). We know where the church is because believers gather around the Word and sacraments, but in these visible congregations there will always be hypocrites (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

The church always will be under attack from false teachings and worldly influences (Matthew 7:15; 2 Timothy 3:1-5). But the church will endure because the Word of God will endure (1 Peter 1:23-25). We have God's promise that when the Word is proclaimed, he is at work to accomplish his purposes (Isaiah 55:10, 11). That is why the church gathers around and uses the Word and sacraments. Jesus promised his presence when believers gather in his name (Matthew 18:20). The Spirit is at work through the gospel of Jesus, bringing unbelievers to faith and strengthening the faith of believers (Romans 10:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; John 3:5, 6; Titus 3:5).

When we see believers and the gospel under attack, we can wonder if God is still at work and if the church will endure. But we find comfort in God's promise to preserve and bless his little flock (John 10:27-30; Luke 12:32). Instead of getting envious about larger church organiza-

tions, we endeavor to faithfully do the work Jesus has given his church to do. Believers simply proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15).

Luther summarized this well when he confessed in the Smalcald Articles, "We do not concede to them that they are the church, and frankly they are not the church. We do not want to hear what they command or forbid in the name of the church, because, God be praised, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is: holy believers and 'the little sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd.' This is why children pray in this way, 'I believe in one holy Christian church.' . . . Its holiness exists in the Word of God and true faith" (Part III, Article XII).

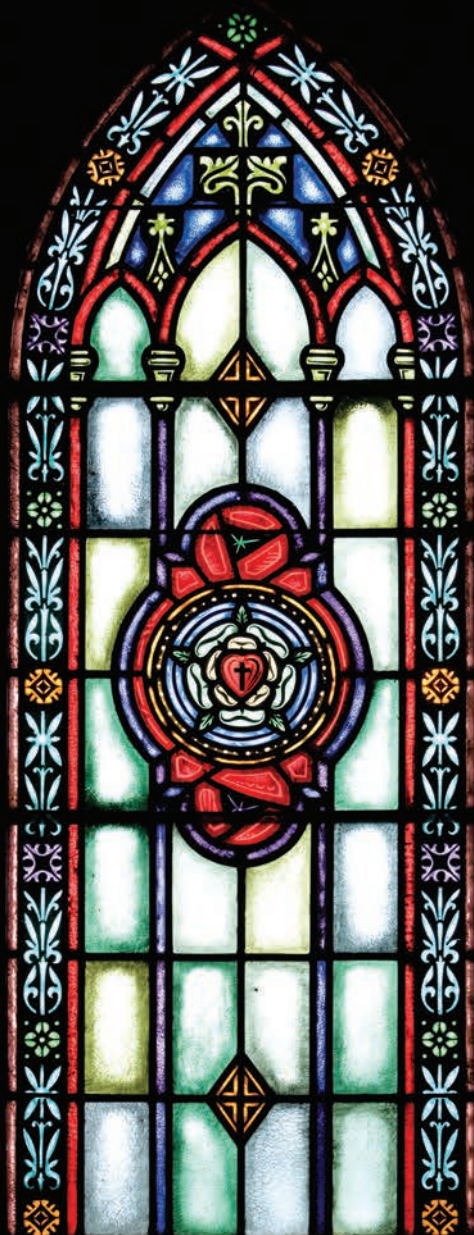
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Read Ephesians 2:19-22. Why does Paul say that we are "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets"? What does it mean that Jesus is "the chief cornerstone" of the church?
2. Read Matthew 16:15-18 and 24:14. How do these words of Jesus assure us that the church will endure? What comfort do Jesus' words provide when we see the gospel and the church under attack?

Contributing editor Joel Otto, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Salem, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



This is the 13th article in a 14-part series on key doctrinal emphases that Luther brought back to light through the Reformation. Find this article and answers online after Oct. 5 at wels.net/forwardinchrist.



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE TRULY LUTHERAN



Scripture alone

A lesson for the next generation is to continue to depend on God's Word for what you believe and teach. Joel D. Otto

My grandfather, Professor Armin Schuetze, celebrated his 100th birthday in April.

Milestones that end in two zeroes are worth mentioning. He served in the full-time public ministry for 51 years, the last 33 years as a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, where he taught pastoral theology and counseling—courses which his son now teaches—and church history and the Lutheran Confessions—courses which I now have the privilege to teach. He especially loved teaching the courses on Luther.

This is, of course, another milestone year—the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. I asked my grandfather what he would want the next generation to know and remember about the Lutheran Reformation. He said, “If God hadn’t sent Luther to reclaim the truth that we’re saved by grace alone through faith alone, who knows where we would be?”

He then went on to emphasize the other *sola*, the other *alone*—*sola Scriptura* or Scripture alone. In fact, if it were not for “Scripture alone,” how would we know about the certainty of our salvation by grace alone through faith alone? How would we know anything about Jesus?

Scripture alone—not traditions, not human reason, not dreams or visions, not feelings or emotions—is the source of teaching. It’s how God reveals his saving work in Christ. That’s why Luther said, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God.”

Scripture alone—not my prayers or personal decisions—is how God gives me the gift of faith. The gospel in Word and sacraments is the power of God for my salvation. That’s why Luther wrote, “The Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel.”

Scripture alone—not the latest gimmick or the preacher’s entertaining stories—is how God gets his work done in the church. Proclaiming his Word is the mission Jesus gave to his church. That’s why Luther preached, “I simply taught, preached, and wrote God’s Word. . . . I did nothing; the Word did everything” (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 51, p. 77).

Scripture alone is why Luther preached and taught almost to the day he died. It’s why he translated the Bible into the language of the people. It’s why he wrote his catechisms. It’s why he penned countless letters comforting and encouraging people with the gospel. It’s why he wrote hymns to sing the Word into people’s heads and hearts. It’s why he wanted every child to have an education—so everyone could read the Bible.

And it’s why my grandfather, even in retirement, wrote books, taught Bible classes, and spent three months (in the dead of winter!) at the WELS mission in Russia when he was 82. It’s why, when I visited him a few years ago, he was in his study with his Hebrew Bible and Luther’s commentary on the Psalms.

I remember his remarks at his 90th birthday celebration. He was thankful that his 7 children, his 28 grandchildren and all their spouses, and his great-grandchildren (now numbering more than 60) were all baptized children of God who regularly heard God’s Word.

If there’s any lesson from the Lutheran Reformation—and from a 100-year-old professor—maybe that’s it. Be in the Word. Read it. Hear it. Learn it. Memorize it. Proclaim it to family and friends. It works!

Contributing editor Joel Otto, a professor at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, is a member at Salem, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

