



Reformation Lutheran Church

“Come and See, Learn and Rejoice, Go and Tell!”

November 2020

Seeing the crowds, [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” - Matthew 5:1-3 - Jesus said a lot of things that are contrary to what we might expect if we didn't know him. We come to know him better and better as we dwell in the Holy Scriptures and let his words, like the teachings from the Sermon on the Mount here in Matthew, wash over us. When we were “in the world” (1 John 4:5) these words of his made no sense to us, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the merciful, and the persecuted.” But now that we are in Christ, they make all kinds of sense. I don't know about you, but I'm guessing you haven't always felt particularly blessed when you were grieving or when you were trying to help others work out their issues, when you were being criticized for your faith or when you felt empty and yearned for more of God. But the truth of Jesus' words begins to make more sense to us the closer he draws us near, and when we are struggling is the precise time when he draws us the closest. Strange how we realize how much we need Jesus in times of trouble! In times of plenty and peace, we get so comfortable that we fail to reach for Jesus. That's exactly why Jesus says what he says! You will be blessed when you are down and out, when your life is turned upside down, when you don't know which way to go... then and only then are we ready for more of Jesus. Someone may have told you all of this sometime in your life, and if you're like me, you probably didn't listen or understand. But when it happens, when you find yourself on the receiving end of sorrow, pain, spite, and even evil, then you come to understand what Jesus was speaking about. Why do we always have to learn the hard way? (Stubborn and prideful people that we are?!) But knowing how Jesus turns everything around means that when trouble comes next time, and it will come, we can recall our Lord's words and know for certain that our blessings are coming! He will draw us close to him, he will care for our wounded souls and helpless bodies, and he will remind us of his never failing love for us. Amen.

Pr.

*“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”
1 Thessalonians 5:18*

Ah, November. Cooler weather (maybe), cozy fires (see previous maybe,) sweater weather (ditto,) and hopefully a little slower pace of life. And then there's Thanksgiving! I love Thanksgiving, especially the dressing... ☺ Many families that gather ask each member to list a few things they are grateful for. It's easy to rattle off a few things and proceed with dinner. But – have you ever taken the time to think what gratitude really is? The Latin root of the word gratitude is grata or gratia —a given gift— and from this same root we get our word grace, which means a gift freely given that is unearned. Gratitude is being aware of, and thankful for, the good things that happen in our lives and taking the time to express appreciation and return kindness. Studies have shown that gratitude actually makes us healthier. Improving immune systems. Lowering blood pressure. Making people more likely to exercise and eat right. Improving sleep quality and quantity. Gratitude banishes negative emotions. When we gain positive emotions, they drive out negative emotions. Your brain only has so much room for emotions. Giving thanks is mentioned in the Bible at least 140 times and the similar “praise” is mentioned even more. Give it some thought. I bet we all have so much more to be grateful for than we realize.

Peace be with you,
Gabi

Treasurer's Report: Thanks to everyone who is keeping up with their tithes! It really does make a difference. With folks being out because of Covid and other issues, it is starting to make a difference in our bank account. It's a small slide down, but we don't want it to keep going backwards.

Blessings to all,
Judy

Fellowship: Advent will be here before we know it. The first Wednesday service will be December 2nd. At the moment, we plan to have a soup and bread meal beforehand as we have in the past. (Yay!) More info to come as we get closer to time.

Property: We are still trying to decide on what carpet to get, should know soon. I am in the process of getting bids on rekeying the doors. I will have that information for council meeting. Work day will be Saturday November 28th.

Education – Our in person Bible study will resume at some point in life. 😊 Thanks to Chuck for sending our regular email studies.

Worship and Music: Hopefully, this Covid issue will pass soon either by Herd Immunity or a vaccine. Either way it will be great to get back to some sort of normalcy. With that in mind, we continue holding Sunday services each week with social distancing as the rule. We ask that you wear a mask when you arrive...you can take it off once you get to your seat and then put it on once you leave your seat for fellowship. We continue to send the service and Pastor Jon's audio sermons to everyone who doesn't make the Sunday morning service. Please feel free to share them with those you know who may also not be attending church or who are unchurched. It may warm some hearts, and our welcome mat is always open.

Beginning on Monday our daily devotion will also contain the beginning of our review of the Sacraments from Luther's Small Catechism. We will begin with an overview of the Sacraments, then work through Baptism, and transition into the Sacrament of the Alter. These are foundational to Lutheranism. We just celebrated Reformation Sunday, and one of the key issues of follow-of to the Reformation was a disagreement over the Sacrament of the Alter. We are Lutheran today because of what we believe concerning this Sacrament.

Mission and Ministry: With fall come some of our best opportunities for Outreach. There has been discussion about forgoing OCC this year in favor of keeping our focus in our own community. Sheriff Jolley and his department will again partner with us in distributing food boxes as we did last year. We are considering Thrivent Grant Cards for other local projects as well. Stay tuned for more info!



17th – Seth Rowell

18th – Jack Rowe

18th – Clay Ramming

22nd – Cheryle Wadsworth



Sunday – November 1st – executive council

Saturday – November 8th – council

Wednesday, November 11th - Veteran's Day in America, Armistice Day, 1918, Remembered

Saturday – November 28th – clean up day

	<u>Nov.1</u>	<u>Nov.8</u>	<u>Nov. 15</u>	<u>Nov.22</u>	<u>Nov. 29</u>
Altar Guild	Judy	Wayne	Junior	Carolyn	Judy
Comm. Asst.	none needed as we are currently using intinction during communion				
Usher	Junior	Carolyn	Junior	Judy	Junior
Lector	Karen	Tammy	Gabi	Wayne	Lynne
Sermon	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor	Chuck

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION: DEFENSE, PROFESSION, AND INVITATION

June 25, 1530, was an auspicious day for the Christian church in the Holy Roman Empire, for on that day Saxon chancellor Christian Beyer read the Augsburg Confession to Emperor Charles V himself and to the other assembled representatives at the diet of Augsburg in southwestern Germany. Prepared by Martin Luther’s friend Philip Melancthon, with input and background materials from other University of Wittenberg colleagues, the presentation of the Augsburg Confession on this day would come to be regarded as the “birthday” of the Lutheran church. In fact, this public confession has been so central to Lutheran identity that its adherents have often been referred to as the “Church of the Augsburg Confession.”

While immediate preparation for Augsburg can be said to go back a year or two from 1530, in many ways the Augsburg Confession was almost thirteen years in the making, ever since Luther had initiated the Reformation as a public movement with the posting of his Ninety-Five Theses in 1517. Teachers and leaders of the church were openly challenging some of the most important practices of the late medieval Roman church and, even more significantly, the theology on which those practices were based.

Simply stated, neither this Wittenberg appeal for reform nor the Roman disciplinary responses to it since 1517 had been successful. Followers of Luther hoped that the Diet of Augsburg in 1530 would demonstrate the validity of their critique and the strength of their evangelical theological claims. On the other hand, Rome sought the kind of rejection of the reformers' dissent that would curtail the spread of this movement once and for all.

As intriguing as the background historical detail is, much more important is the theological substance of the Augsburg Confession itself. As Luther had consistently done, Melancthon begins by affirming the classical understanding of God as Holy Trinity, and the person of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully human, on which the consensus of the universal church had always been predicated. From there, he spells out what is absolutely central to the Reformation theological argument, namely, how Father, Son and Holy Spirit forgive sinful humanity and restore spiritually helpless people to their created status as God's own daughters and sons. This gospel is classically encapsulated in the Confession's Article IV, on "Justification": "We receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace, for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us." Literally everything else in the twenty-eight articles of the confession points to, reasserts, or flows out of this article.

To offer but one example of each, the Augsburg Confession's discussion of human being's fallenness underscores their inability to contribute in even the slightest way to their reconciliation with God. Indeed, they "cannot by nature possess true fear of God and true faith in God" (Article II, paragraph 1). These are not matters of personal decision or human achievement. For human beings to fear, love, and trust God requires the "trace, help, and operation of the Holy Spirit: (Article XVIII, paragraph 2).

The confessions' articles that are joined most directly to justification reiterate Article IV's point in similar language. The Christian life is not about earning favor with God; rather, "forgiveness of sins and justification are taken hold of by faith" (Article VI, paragraph 2). To assert anything else, Melancthon never tires of repeating, actually minimizes and insults the work of Jesus himself.

The topics that emanate from justification are equally evangelical in character. The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper at their core are "signs and testimonies of God's will toward us in order thereby to awaken and strengthen our faith" (Article XIII, paragraph 1). Likewise, the church is defined not as an institution but in terms of people whom God has restored through these very means of grace: "The church is the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel" (Article VIII, paragraph 1).

These all too brief samples represent the theological core of the Augsburg Confession. The confession defended the changes in practice brought about by Luther's reformation. It proposed a theological foundation and rationale for those reforms. In the process the confessors at Augsburg were inviting their Roman contemporaries – and anyone else who would listen – to reexamine the Word of God and the ancient creedal tradition to determine for themselves whether or not these articles were a more faithful statement and elaboration of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The invitation grounded in the Augsburg Confession's profession of faith has had a varied reception since that early summer afternoon in 1530. Today, Philip Melancthon and his colleagues would doubtless be heartened that the confession they made over 480 years ago continues to be regarded as both abidingly valid and compelling. Above all, though, they would invite their fellow confessors of the twenty-first century to remain focused on God's unwavering promises in Jesus Christ, because these promises of forgiveness and new life are the point from which all Christian confessing truly begins and to which it all necessarily returns.

"THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE"

