



# Reformation Lutheran Church

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

January 2021

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*Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. - Luke 2:25-27*

Many people have taken the time to think about their “Bucket List,” that list of things we want to do before we die and meet our maker. Perhaps you have given that some thought already. Maybe your list contains all the places you’d like to travel, for example to Israel or Germany to see Wittenberg for yourself. Or perhaps you want to run a marathon someday or go white water rafting before you consider your life to be complete? It’s fun to think about what we would do if we had the time and resources. For Simeon, however, there was just one thing he wanted before he died: to see the arrival of the long awaited Messiah of Israel. For Simeon this was no pipe dream! He had the assurance of the Holy Spirit that he would not depart from earth until he looked into the very face of God. Imagine his delight (and the amazement of actually KNOWING) that the infant in Mary’s arms was the one! This baby was the Messiah of Israel! For Simeon this was not just a “day made” but a life made. After this encounter he was ready to die. He had seen the miracle of God’s salvation, in the flesh! He didn’t need to wait around any longer to see what would happen in the next 30 plus years. This was all he needed and what was promised to him. We are the beneficiaries of Simeon’s promised encounter too. Through Simeon and Anna’s faithful prayers and patient waiting, we have as a part of Holy Scripture the account of Jesus’ first days of life and how God provided witnesses to his nativity, circumcision, and consecration. This good news makes our day, our life, too! What a way to end one’s life on a high note! I, for one, am rather happy for the two elderly prophets, that they didn’t have to witness the last days of Jesus’ life, but got to be there at the beginning! But for those of us who know the rest of the story, we know that Jesus’ faithfulness outweighed even the faithful Simeon and Anna!

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*The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”  
Lamentations 3:22-24*

Goodbye 2020! I think we can all agree that it was not the best year. What will 2021 bring though? Is there anxiety over what’s to come? If you listen to the news, the talking heads will be sure to tell you there’s plenty to worry about. While we do have legitimate things in our lives we need to be concerned with, we are promised God’s love and mercy Every. Single. Day. We have 365 single days of possibilities and opportunities ahead of us. Let us be hopeful for ourselves, our church, and our world. God’s got this!

Peace be with you, Gabi

**Treasurer’s Report:** As we come to the end of the year, all is looking pretty good. Thanks to all who are keeping up with their tithes, whether in person or by mail! We are starting to make a small slide backwards, but are holding our own. We continue to be thankful for our generous landlord and those congregations and businesses that are also so generous to us. Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Blessings to all, Judy

**Fellowship:** We finally had a chance to have some actual food and fellowship during Advent with our meals prior to our Wednesday night services. Thanks to those who contributed! As we see how things continue to go with the covid situation, we can ease into a fellowship night now and again. Maybe start with a movie night. Any ideas are much appreciated!

**Property:** The locks to the sanctuary and fellowship hall have been changed. Thanks to Cheryle for getting us an estimate and thanks to Chuck for being there for the locksmith. Our January cleaning day will be on January 30<sup>th</sup>.

**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:** Boy will it be great to see 2020 in the rear-view mirror!!! Hopefully, 2021 will be a huge improvement. As with the last several newsletters, this one is ditto the others. The vaccine is out, so with any luck we can all get it. Sunday services continue each week with social distancing and mask wearing as the rules. We continue to send the service and Pastor Jon’s audio sermons to everyone who doesn’t make the Sunday morning service. Let me know if there is someone you feel would like to receive our Sunday service, and I will gladly add them to the distribution list. We have concluded a brief Advent season...thanks to all who brought the soup. Our numbers were small, but the fellowship and the message each week were wonderful.

We are now in the new church year. Hopefully, you have noticed a change in Pastor Jon’s vestments and on the front wall. The color for this season is White. White is the color of purity and completeness. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow” because of Christ’s birth. White reinforces that message of joy. White is the appointed color for Christmas and its twelve days; Epiphany and the first Sunday following it, observed as the Baptism of Our Lord; and the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, also known as Transfiguration Sunday. In all, white serves as the best festive color for the church year.

Don’t forget the January-March 2021 edition of Portals of Prayer. These daily devotions only take a few minutes out of your day and make a great way to start the day. They are available for everyone to pick up on the table in the back of the sanctuary.

Beginning in January, we will begin looking at the Sacrament of the Altar in our Monday devotion.

**Mission and Ministry:** Two Thrivent projects down and one to go! We just completed our food box project and put together ten food boxes complete with non-perishables, one ham and one turkey each. Sheriff Jolley and his deputies delivered seven of them to families they knew were in great need and the other three went to families we knew of. Our next project will be requested school supplies for a special needs Title 1 school. We have so much potential money to use for projects. We have a chance to use at least six (!) \$250 Thrivent Grant Cards in a year. If you have an idea, please share it!

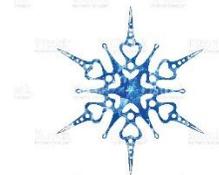
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**January 4<sup>th</sup> – Erik Benway**  
**January 9<sup>th</sup> – Junior Erickson**  
**January 18<sup>th</sup> – Charles Patterson**



# JANUARY



**Sunday – January 10th – executive council**

**Sunday – January 17th – council**

**Saturday – January 30th– clean up day starting at 9:00**

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	<u>Jan.3</u>	<u>Jan. 10</u>	<u>Jan. 17</u>	<u>Jan. 24</u>	<u>Jan 31</u>
<b>Altar Guild</b>	Wayne	Junior	Carolyn	Judy	Junior
<b>Comm. Asst.</b>	none needed as we are currently using intinction during communion				
<b>Usher</b>	Junior	Judy	Wayne	Junior	Judy
<b>Lector</b>	Lynne	Junior	Chuck	Karen	Tammy
<b>Sermon</b>	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor	Wayne	Pastor

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## **WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH LUTHERAN HYMNS FOR TERRIBLE TIMES**

Lutherans have a unique history when it comes to hymns. Although a visit to some of our congregations might make one wonder whether the nickname is any longer justified. the original Lutherans, from 1517 forward, really did become a "singing church."

Martin Luther wrote some of the first hymns for the Lutheran movement. "A Mighty Fortress" has been called the Battle Hymn of the Reformation. And the solid hymnody that came to be known as (he Lutheran chorale made it clear to those both within and beyond the Lutheran church that this denomination affirmed solid, biblically-grounded, God-centered texts and rugged, durable melodies.

A unique chapter in the history of Lutheran hymnody was written during one of the most frightening periods in the history of the church. By the early seventeenth century, Roman Catholic Church leaders-as well as military captains-thought they saw their chance (to exterminate Lutheranism once and for all. They launched a bloody campaign designed to force Lutheran congregations back into the Roman fold. The battle raged primarily in Germany, between 1618 and 1648-hence, its name, the Thirty Years' War.

It is hard to exaggerate the damage this bloody conflict did to Germany. Fully one-third of the German population was exterminated. Roman Catholic armies threatened for a period to win the day. In its darkest hour, Lutheranism was rescued by a Swedish army under (the leadership of its Lutheran king, Gustavus Adolphus. (The Minnesota college with his name has a bronze bust of Gustavus on display on its campus mall.)

Many powerful Lutheran hymns of faith were created during this terrible time. One of the most famous, and most enduring, is one that Lutherans and other Christians often sing as though it were intended for use in happy times. In fact, Pastor Martin Rinkart's "Now Thank We All Our God" was set down on paper during a time of terror.

His city, Eilenberg (near Martin Luther's birthplace and death-city, Eisleben), fell under siege from invading armies. A pestilence ravaged the town, and famine killed many that disease did not. During this dark period Rinkart conducted funerals for nearly 5,000 people, including that of his own wife. In the midst of it all, he wrote "Now Thank We All Our God." (Contrary to what some believe, the hymn was not written to celebrate the end of the war; it was completed years earlier, in the midst of the fighting.)

Other notable Lutheran hymn writers from this period include Johann Heermann and Johann Crueger. Heermann wrote the text for "Ah, Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended?" while Crueger composed the melody.

Johann Michael Altenburg wrote "Fear Not, Thou Faithful Christian Flock," considered by some musicologists to be one of the greatest hymns of Christian hymnody. During the war years Altenburg served a congregation near Erfurt, where Martin Luther once attended university. Altenburg's congregation lost 600 members due to wartime plague.

Johann Rist, who experienced the plundering of his home and loss of most of his possessions in 1643 while serving a Lutheran congregation near Hamburg, still managed to compose 659 hymns, two of the most familiar of which are "Break Forth, O Beauteous, Heavenly Light" and "O Living Bread from Heaven."

It has said that the Thirty Years War was a crucible in which Lutheranism was tested and found durable. Historians find high irony in the reality that, when the fighting ended with the Peace of Westphalia, the territories that each faith group-Lutherans and Roman Catholics-controlled were essentially the same as those they had possessed at the outset of the war. The boundaries didn't change much, but Germany was crippled economically or politically for generations. (Many in the first great wave of Lutheran immigrants coming to the U.S. left their ruined farms, shops, and homes following this war and migrated to Pennsylvania and adjoining states.)

The sources of Lutheran hymnody are diverse. Modern Lutheran hymnals contain far more than solid German hymns (including Scandinavian, English, African, and Latin American hymns). But the unique circumstances of the Thirty Years' War provided some of the most dearly bought and, for some, the most beloved hymnody in Lutheranism's musical treasury.

**“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”**