



# Reformation Lutheran Church

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

April 2021

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“This is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” - Exodus: 15:2

Have you ever felt backed into a corner and could see no way of escape? Maybe it was having to endure a browbeating by someone angry with you, or maybe you got stuck in a crowd and had to wait for folks to leave the area. Perhaps it was something worse and you were truly trapped, in danger, and fearing for your life.

As Israel fled Egypt after the last of ten plagues God inflicted on Pharaoh in the Passover, it looked like they would finally be free of the king of Egypt. But, the king changed his mind and decided to pursue the Israelites after he recognized what he was giving up by letting them go to the wilderness to worship God. When the Israelites realized that they were being pursued by an angry army, they began to fear for their lives. As they headed east, they became trapped between the Red Sea and the pursuing troops. They were backed into the proverbial corner with zero viable options.

We know how this story unfolds: God tells Moses to strike the water and it perfectly divides into two parallel walls of water, and Israel walks through on dry ground. As the Egyptians follow, Moses was commanded by the Lord to stretch out his hand over the sea and the entire army was drowned: chariots, horses, and soldiers! When the Israelites arrive at the other side, catch their breath, and settle down a bit, Moses and the whole congregation sing a song that is recorded in Exodus 15, “The Lord has triumphed gloriously... he is my strength and my song.”

This story foreshadows God’s final victory over death. As Jesus was backed into a deadly corner after the mock trial by the Pharisees and Pilate, it seemed there would be no last-minute miracle for him. But Jesus had been telling his disciples and anyone else who would listen, that he had to suffer at the hands of the religious leaders, die, and on the third day rise. His disciples, and even his own mother, watched him suffer the torture of execution on a cross. There was no way out of it! They hadn’t put things together about what he’d said previously, and in their grief they certainly weren’t doing a lot of puzzle solving. But just as God saved Israel as they faced certain death, so he enacted his greatest miracle ever: Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. The Lord has triumphed! He is risen indeed! Amen.

Pr.

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*"He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee..."* Luke 24:6

Is there any more powerful and meaningful verse in all of the Bible? Our whole Christian belief in the Lord as our Savior rests in these words. He has risen! He is our hope of new life and life eternal. How fortunate that we get to celebrate this extraordinary event in what is springtime for us. Buds peeking out of the ground getting ready to show their beauty. Azaleas, Apple Blossoms, and other trees already in full bloom. New life out of what was once cold and dead. Those in the southern hemisphere are heading into fall, but the promise of spring and new life is always there. Earth has never missed a Spring.

For all of us, I pray that we take some extra time to enjoy the splendor of God's handiwork and give thanks and praise for the new life that we are given in Him.

*“Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in the books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.” – Martin Luther*

Peace be with you, Gabi

**Treasurer’s Report:** The first quarter is looking pretty good financially. Thanks to those keeping up with tithes. Council voted to invest our recent donation plus some, into a Jackson account where it has more potential than with the current interest rates at the bank. We are certainly blessed! Blessing to you, Judy

**Fellowship:** As more Covid restrictions are lifted, let's see how things go in our area. If things look good, let's consider a nice potluck meal sometime in May. It would be a great way to enjoy each other's company and get ready for summer. We may even try to have a movie night! Any other suggestions are certainly welcome.

**Property:** Our April clean-up day will be Saturday, the 24<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 a.m.

**Education:** In-person Bible study will resume, hopefully, sooner than later. 😊 Thanks to Chuck for sending our regular email studies.

**Worship and Music:** The Covid issue continues to improve. Fewer people are testing positive and more people...particularly those in the most vulnerable groups are getting the vaccine. As I said last month, our attendance has not changed, so that begs the question...are those who have not been coming never coming back or are they still concerned about Covid?

Obviously, we don't know the answer to those questions, but we will continue to hold our Sunday service at 10:30. We will also continue to send the service and Pastor Jon's audio sermons to everyone who doesn't make the Sunday morning service. Our mission as a Lutheran congregation is the preach the Law and Gospel, to do that with our congregational family and also when and wherever possible to do it within the community. Based on that mission statement, I believe we are accomplishing it.

As I've said in the last several newsletters, please 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 picked up a couple of families on our Sunday e-mail list, so hopefully that will bring them to a Sunday service at some point.

Friday, April 2 will be our Good Friday service at 7:00 and Sunday, April 4 will be our Easter service. These are always special services, so hopefully, we will see some faces we have not seen for a while.

We are fully operational at Thrive with a 9:15 service each Sunday. We have not received the go-ahead yet to begin at the Oaks, but we've been told that could happen “any day.”

Hopefully, you are enjoying our look at the Lutheran Liturgy on Mondays along with our daily devotion. The special Lenten devotion that is written by Pastor Jim Cavanagh from Holy Trinity in Springfield, GA will continue through the end of Lent, and then we will go back to our daily devotion provided by the Lutheran Hour.

**Mission and Ministry:** We're getting information together for a spring Thrivent project. We hope to be able to work with Focus and HOPE Closet again. Be on the lookout for more information to come soon.

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BLESSINGS  
ON YOUR  
BIRTHDAY

**There are no birthdays to be acknowledged this month.**

**APRIL CALENDAR**

**Sunday – April 4<sup>th</sup> – Easter Sunday – He is risen!**

**Sunday – April 11<sup>th</sup> – Executive Council**

**Sunday – April 18<sup>th</sup> – Council**

**Saturday – April 24<sup>th</sup>– Clean-up day beginning around 9:00 a.m.**

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	<b>April 4</b>	<b>April 11</b>	<b>April 18</b>	<b>April 25</b>
<b>Altar Guild</b>	Wayne	Junior	Judy	Carolyn
<b>Usher</b>	Junior	Judy	Junior	Wayne
<b>Lector</b>	Wayne	Tammy	Karen	Lynne
<b>Sermon</b>	Pastor	Pastor	Chuck	Pastor
<b>Thrive</b>	Pastor	Gabi	Chuck	Pastor

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**WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH “Spener and Pietism”**

"What would Lutheranism have to show in the cause of world evangelization if it were not for the pietists?" So opines a critic of Pietism who concluded at last that its defects were overshadowed by the renewed interest in missions it stimulated.

"Pietism" is the term applied to a movement beginning in the latter part of the seventeenth century in Germany. Its defenders describe it as a positive response to a drift toward mere formalism among many orthodox Lutherans. Its detractors label it as negative and legalistic and, ultimately, a catalyst for rationalism.

Philip Jacob Spener is generally regarded as the "father" of Lutheran Pietism. In 1675, as an attempt to address the spiritual conditions as he viewed them, Spener published his Pia Desideria. (pious desires) in which he not only offered his analysis of the state of the church but also offered several proposals Philip Jacob Spener aimed at renewal of spiritual life.

Lamenting the general lack of Bible knowledge, Spener's first proposal urged a wider diffusion of the Scriptures. He recommended that there be more reading of the Scriptures in public worship. He suggested regular meetings for Bible study and discussion led by pastors. He emphasized the importance of daily Bible reading in the home. Spener was convinced that if only people would expose themselves to the Word of God, spiritual renewal would be the outcome. He said, "The more at home the Word of God is among us, the more we shall bring about faith and its fruits.'

Reminiscent of Luther's sixteenth century rediscovery of the gospel, Spener called for a renewed appreciation and application of "the priesthood of all believers" (cf. 1 Peter 2:9). Much of the alleged spiritual lethargy was the result of inadequate use of the laity in his estimation. He contended that the common exercise of spiritual gifts was critical to a renewal of spiritual life. The small-group Bible studies (collegia pietatis) that emerged as one of the first developments of the Pietist movement provided an opportunity for the use of those gifts.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Pietism had waned considerably as an identifiable movement. However, its multiplied beneficiaries and adherents continued to make a profound impact in Germany and elsewhere not only on church life but also in society. Pietism emerged ultimately as a vast missionary movement extending the gospel in many parts of the world including colonial America.

Pietism's influence among Lutherans in America is readily observable in several of its church groups. The principal organizer of American Lutheranism, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, was commissioned to go to America in 1742 by August Hermann Francke, a Pietist leader. The German founders of the first Lutheran congregation in Pennsylvania in the early eighteenth century had brought with them Luther's Bible, his catechism, and a devotional classic used by August Hermann Francke the Pietists, Johan Arndt's True Christianity.

The founder of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, C. F. W. Walther, though eschewing the excesses of later Pietists, had saturated himself with the writings of Spener and Francke as a student in Germany. A deeply pious man, Walther balanced emphasis on doctrinal purity with a living faith.

The ELCA reflects the influence of Pietism among its constituents, particularly those of Scandinavian and Finnish descent. The Norwegian-American descendants in the ELCA as well as in smaller groups such as the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren trace their spiritual moorings in large part to the Pietist revival movements in Scandinavia.

While Pietism as "fathered" by Spener and furthered by a host of others is open for criticism due to aberrations and excesses among its adherents, its positive contributions are many. Central motifs that have ignited spiritual renewal in many lands include:

The centrality of the Bible, inspired, authoritative, and effective in accomplishing God's purpose to save the "lost" and sanctify the "found." To the extent that Pietism has relied on the Word it has made a positive impact.

The necessity of a "living faith." Though the sacraments are efficacious "means of grace," wherein faith is created and nurtured, the baptized need to have a "living faith" which is not mere intellectual assent to the gospel but personal trust in Christ.

The expectation of a godly lifestyle as empowered by the Holy Spirit. True faith is dynamic and invariably results in the emergence of "fruits."

The urgency of missions as incumbent upon the church in every age. From the beginning of Pietism, the missionary enterprise has loomed large as a central purpose of the church.

The best of Pietism has contributed immensely to the progress of the Christian church. May our gracious Lord grant a renewal of the Pietist centralities in our time, all for his glory and the extension of his kingdom.

**“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”**