



Reformation Lutheran Church

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

May 2021

“...in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:17)

In some ways It is a shame that the Gospel of John does not get its own year in the common lectionary. The passages are poetic, beautiful, and full of emotion. What John writes is meaningful and appropriate for today’s world.

Nicodemus is a religious leader. He knows scripture and is intelligent and devout. If anyone knows all about salvation, it’s him. Yet, he goes to Jesus with questions under cover of night because approaching Jesus in the daytime would be too risky. He sneaks around to find Jesus and he presents his spiritual predicament to him. “Rabbi,” he says, “we know that you are a teacher come from God.” A statement, rather than a question, begins the dialogue with Jesus who says, “You must be born again.” Nicodemus takes all of what Jesus says literally. “How can than these things be?” We too wonder “how” all these things can be.

Jesus ends the conversation with Nicodemus with that very famous memory verse, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” Many times, that verse has an unintended consequence and it can seem to imply that we can simply be saved by forcing ourselves to believe in Jesus Christ. Salvation does not come from what you do or think. It’s a result of what God has done to us and for us. Salvation comes from Christ and from Him alone.

Nicodemus encounters Jesus while trying to find his own path toward salvation. He discovers that salvation is not something to be grasped or earned but something that is given to us freely by God. Our understanding of hope, love, and salvation begins and ends with Christ.

Like Nicodemus, we discover that our salvation is not rooted in ourselves. Our salvation is found in the light that dares darkness to stand before it. Our salvation is found in the person of Jesus Christ, who came to earth to tell us God so loved the world (and us!) that nothing would separate us from His love. Salvation isn’t obtained because we mustered up a little mental ability. Instead, salvation is ours because God so loved the world that God came to our rescue. And because of that love, nothing can ever be the same again. That is our salvation and our greatest hope. Amen.

Pr.

Can you believe it's already May? Even though summer doesn't "officially" start until June 20th, many folks see the end of May/Memorial Day as the start of summer for them. School is out. The weather is definitely travel/beach worthy. The lazy days of summer are fast approaching. As we relax, travel, enjoy more family time, or enjoy whatever summer plans we make, let us always keep our focus on the One who makes it all possible.

Lord God, Creator of all things, guide our steps and strengthen our hearts during these months of summer and vacation days. Grant us refreshment of mind and body. Watch over us in the weeks of rest ahead, and bless us, according to Your will, with the fulfillment of our summer hopes and dreams.

It is in your name we pray. Amen.

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. That investment is currently in process. We are certainly blessed!
Blessing to you, Judy

Fellowship: There is nothing in the works for May, however.....POTLUCK time is finally in sight! Mark your calendars for Sunday, June 6th! Whoo hoo!

Property: Our May clean-up day will be Saturday, the 29th, 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. The CDC is loosening their rules and beginning to open things up. Hopefully, that means we will see more people on Sunday mornings.

It is almost embarrassing to write this column each month because it changes so little. I look forward to the time when I can talk about new things we are doing. We 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.

We are fully operational at Thrive with a 9:15 service each Sunday. We actually had 8 attend the service this past Sunday. We look forward to the go-ahead to begin at the Oaks.

We are continuing our look at the Lutheran Liturgy on Mondays along with our daily devotion. I hope everyone enjoyed the special Lenten devotion that was written by Pastor Jim Cavanagh from Holy Trinity in Springfield, GA. That was a nice change and provided some very interesting insight into one of Lutheran's great theologians.

If you have a part of Lutheran theology that you would like to have on Mondays following the liturgy, please let me know.

Mission and Ministry: We're still trying to get with our contacts at HOPE Closet/Focus to see what their needs are. Everyone please keep watch for opportunities to serve others in our community.



May 3rd – Sondra Coulter
May 15th – Mel Hanson
May 23rd – Linda Adams
May 24th – Samuel DeWinter

MAY CALENDAR

Sunday – May 2nd – Executive Council

Sunday – May 9th (Mother's Day) – Council

Saturday – May 29th – Clean-up day beginning around 9:00 a.m.

	May 2	May 9	May 16	May 23	May 30
Altar Guild	Wayne	Junior	Judy	Carolyn	Wayne
Usher	Junior	Judy	Junior	Wayne	Carolyn
Lector	Junior	Chuck	Gabi	Wayne	Tammy
Sermon	Pastor	Pastor	Wayne	Pastor	Pastor
Thrive	Gabi	Chuck	Wayne	Pastor	Gabi

**WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH
 “Lutherans in the American South”**

"Lutherans" and "the American South" are not exactly synonymous in the popular imagination. We think of Baptists in the South and Lutherans in the upper Midwest, but that is to neglect important and long-established American Lutheran communities that stretch from Virginia to Texas. While these southern Lutherans are not large numerically, they have made important contributions to their region and to Lutheranism in America. Historically there were significant Lutheran communities established in the Southeast (Virginia to Georgia) in colonial times, then in Texas in the nineteenth century, and elsewhere in the South (especially in Florida) in the twentieth century. The South is also home to important communities of African-American and Hispanic Lutherans.

Many of the German Lutheran immigrants to colonial America settled in Pennsylvania, but in search of free land some Lutherans began to move down into the western regions of Virginia (the Shenandoah Valley) as early as the 1710s, from there moving down into western North Carolina. Beginning in the 1730s other German immigrants came into South Carolina and settled in the upland areas around Columbia. At the same time, a group of Lutheran Salzburg refugees settled in Georgia. Initially there were severe shortages of resources and pastors, but many of these Lutherans managed to form congregations. Though some of them suffered during the Revolutionary War, these congregations managed to grow. Eventually in the nineteenth century Lutherans established synods in Virginia and North and South Carolina. Doctrinal differences led to the formation of the Tennessee Synod in this same territory.

Although some of the first southern Lutherans were opposed to slavery, some of them eventually owned slaves, or at least came to support this "institution" as necessary for their society. Before the Civil War some Lutheran congregations consisted of both whites and African-Americans (but the latter were not equal). During the war southern Lutherans formed their synods into a regional organization, the General Synod South. This was continued after the war and later expanded as the United Synod of the South. Southern Lutherans remained apart from their colleagues in the North until 1918, when they joined with other Lutheran in the colonial (Muhlenberg) tradition to form the United Lutheran Church in America. After the war many African-American Lutherans were excluded from white congregations. They were encouraged to form separate Lutheran congregations, but these struggled from a lack of resources.

The great migration of European Lutherans to the United States from 1840 to 1920 was mainly focused on the American Midwest, and few Lutheran immigrants settled directly in the South. There was one exception, however, and that was the state of Texas. Early German communities were formed in central Texas beginning in the 1840s, and there were also settlements of Swedes and Norwegians. Germans formed the Texas Synod in 1851, while the Scandinavian congregations affiliated with their own national denominations. Though primarily a midwestern group, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod extended its work into Texas and the southeastern states, forming congregations there. The Missouri Synod also began work with African-Americans (including Lutherans) in the South and established congregations and educational institutions there.

In the nineteenth century, American Lutherans founded important educational and social service institutions in the South. The Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary was begun in 1830, as well as colleges in the southeastern states and Texas. The Missouri Synod established schools for African-Americans in North Carolina, New Orleans, and Alabama; the latter, Concordia College Alabama, in Selma, remains as one of the historically black colleges.

After about 1880, some Americans (tired of the northern weather or attracted by opportunities) began to migrate to the South, especially to Florida. They formed Lutheran congregations, usually affiliated with northern denominations. These initial communities were augmented by the great wave of internal migration to the South after World War II. Scores of new Lutheran mission congregations were formed in the South in the 1950s and 1960s, swelling the numbers of Lutherans there (especially in Florida and Texas). With the mergers of the 1960s, and the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988, many southern Lutherans were joined together. A significant number of others are affiliated with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Even with this growth, Lutherans remain only a small part of the whole of the South, where the Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal churches predominate. The historic, "colonial" Lutherans in the southeastern states have long held to their communities, forming what might be called a separate tradition (or even "ethnicity") among their neighbors, where it is at times difficult to maintain a Lutheran confessional identity in the midst of so many others. Newer Lutherans in the South have sometimes been tempted to see their congregations as "outposts" of northern or "ethnic" Lutheranism, but have slowly become a part of their region. These southern Lutherans stand as an important and distinctive part of Lutheranism in America.

“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”