



# Reformation Lutheran Church

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

March 2022

Some questions (or studies) for this Lenten Season:

Romans 10:8b-13 Many people of faith have a difficult time claiming the assurance of salvation, because we tend to think in terms of human works. When we look at our lives and judge ourselves on the basis of what we think a Christian “ought” to look like, we know that we could never measure up to the standards that God expects of us. • Have you ever met people who believed that “being saved” is something they accomplished for themselves? Why is this a false and dangerous conceit? • How does this kind of boasting push Christ out of the picture of salvation? Saint Paul made it clear: to be saved is not an acknowledgement of what we have done, but an acknowledgment of what God has done for us in Christ. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (v. 9).” Note that God is the actor in salvation! • In what sense is faith not a confidence (2 Corinthians 3:4-6) in what we have done, but a confidence in what Christ has done for us? How does this understanding allow us to be bold in saying that we have been saved?

Luke 4:1-13 Think of a time when you encountered someone whose “walls were up” in an aggressive defensiveness. Perhaps it was a person who seemed to be waiting for you to say something they disagree with so they could pounce on you in argument. You can feel the tension in the air it seems. • In what way is the source of the problem in such cases often a lack of trust? Why is trust so important in relationships? As the Holy Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness right after his baptism in the Jordan river, the adversary began to test him by calling into question Jesus’ trust in his Father. The enemy’s goal was to get Jesus to “prove himself” by relying on his divinity to show that he really was the Son of God. But Jesus would not be tricked. • How does Jesus’ faithfulness in the face of temptation demonstrate his trust in God? • Why is trying to “prove ourselves” one of the ways we often give in to the testing we experience? In what ways did Jesus here show that he had nothing to prove? Jesus saw the devil’s challenge for what it was: a trap. “You shall not put the Lord to the test,” he said. • In what way was the devil himself failing the very test that he was putting before Jesus? • How did Jesus experience continual testing in his ministry? How have you experienced testing in your life?

The above from Sola’s Lectionary Text Study.

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*See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone. Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. Song of Songs 2:11-12 NIV*

Spring is almost here! While it’s true that every season has its own particular beauty, I have a special affinity for Spring. I love watching how plants seem to pop up overnight. We have longer days and better weather (sort of!) to enjoy. The birds make their way back to my feeders. The whole world seems to come alive after resting over the winter. Everything is refreshed and renewed. Do you feel refreshed and renewed? As God cares for His creation, He cares even more so for YOU! I pray that His words will nourish us and we too can be refreshed and renewed in Jesus this spring!

Peace be with you,  
Gabi

**Treasurer's Report:** At our congregational meeting on Wednesday, February 16 I presented a report on our financial position. As unsettling as the numbers may have been they should not have come as a surprise as we have travelled this road before.

With that in mind, I challenge each of us to increase our monthly contributions by 10%. I understand that this is quite an ask. However, it is still short of the 15% increase needed just to cover the minimum monthly expenses to keep the doors open.

We are a small family, but a strong one. I am confident that we will be able to succeed in implementing some of the great ideas suggested at the meeting that will provide the means necessary to continue spreading the word of our Lord and Savior.

Thank you for your continued support!

**Fellowship:** We will begin our Lenten meals before service starting on March 9th. We will put a sign-up sheet out.

At our Church Renewal meeting, we discussed several things that we feel may get people to at least notice our church and get in the door. Having a food truck come fairly regularly was one option. We're following through with gathering information for some of those ideas. All ideas are welcome!

**Property:** The bathroom ceiling has been repaired. The insulation still needs to be replaced. Our March clean-up day will be Saturday, the 26<sup>th</sup>, 9:00 a.m.

**Education:** Reading the Bible for Faith! Want to learn how to take Bible study to a deeper, more engaging level? Ever wonder why people have different interpretations of the Bible? Want to understand how and why people arrive at different interpretations of the same passage? Do you sometimes find yourself confused or mystified about the meaning when reading the Bible? Want to learn a way to make sense of the Bible for the sake of faith? If your answer to any or all of these questions is yes, then this course is for you!

The 5-session course is taught by Bud Thompson, of the St Paul Lutheran Seminary faculty. Pastor Thompson is a retired Lutheran pastor who has 35 years of experience as a parish pastor, 20 years of experience teaching the Bible to university students, and for many years has written on the Bible and Catechism for Connections magazine. Beginning on Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup> at 6PM Central, we will meet online for approximately 90 minutes each session for 5 weeks. The sessions will be recorded should someone miss a live session. Hope you will join us!

**Worship and Music:** Ash Wednesday is March 2. We will have a service at 7:00 and each evening beginning at 7:00 for the remainder of Lent.

Although not finalized, we are discussing holding a Passover Seder Supper. As in all Biblical holidays, Passover is both a holiday of remembrance and a holiday of prophecy. Passover for the Jewish people is the annual celebration of God delivering Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 12). The entire service, with its various ceremonies, is designed to help the Jewish people remember the great workings of God when, through signs and wonders, He freed the Jewish people from the bondage of the Egyptians and delivered them to the promised land of Israel. Passover is a holiday of redemption picturing how God used the death of an innocent lamb to redeem the firstborn sons of Israel from death and free the nation of Israel from slavery.

## **Worship and Music (continued):**

Passover is certainly the most important Biblical holiday for Christians. It also clearly pictures the redemption Jesus provided for our sin. The last meal Jesus ate with His disciples in the Upper Room was a Passover meal. It was during this Passover meal that Jesus took a piece of unleavened bread and a cup of wine and said to His disciples that these represented His body given in death and His blood shed for the remission of sins (Luke 22: 19, 20). The Messiah used the story of the redemption from Egypt to illustrate the redemption Jesus provided for us on the cross. Having a Passover dinner, is a beautiful opportunity to celebrate the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in its historical, New Testament setting as it was celebrated by the disciples with the Messiah. We can rejoice "For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

We are still working on the possibility of putting a video recording of Pastor Jon's sermon on our website each week. Anyone who is not able to attend Sunday services will be able to watch and listen to the sermon from Sunday morning. We are presently working on the logistics of recording and loading it onto the website. More on this will follow.

If you haven't been coming to Reformation on Sunday mornings, we would love to see you. If you have been coming, bring a friend or neighbor!

**Mission and Ministry:** We have a whole year of fresh possibilities with our Thrivent cards! All ideas are welcome!

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**March 2<sup>nd</sup> – Eli Ervin**  
**March 27<sup>th</sup> – Don Grigsby**

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| <b>MARCH CALENDAR</b> |
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**Wednesday – March 2nd – Ash Wednesday Service 7:00**

**Wednesday – March 9th – Lenten Meal – 6:00 Service – 7:00**

**Sunday – March 13th – Council - Spring Forward and turn your clocks ahead one hour**

**Wednesday – March 16th – Lenten Meal – 6:00 Service – 7:00**

**Wednesday – March 23rd – Lenten Meal – 6:00 Service – 7:00**

**Saturday – March 26th – Clean-up Day beginning at 9:00**

**Wednesday – March 30th – Lenten Meal – 6:00 Service – 7:00**

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|                    | <b>Mar 2</b> | <b>Mar 6</b> | <b>Mar 9</b> | <b>Mar 13</b> | <b>Mar 16</b> | <b>Mar 20</b> | <b>Mar 23</b> | <b>Mar 27</b> | <b>Mar 30</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Altar Guild</b> | Judy         | Judy         | Junior       | Junior        | Judy          | Judy          | Junior        | Junior        | Judy          |
| <b>Usher</b>       | Junior       | Junior       | Judy         | Judy          | Junior        | Junior        | Judy          | Judy          | Junior        |
| <b>Lector</b>      |              | Lynn         |              | Junior        |               | Chuck         |               | Gabi          |               |
| <b>Sermon</b>      | Pastor       | Pastor       | Pastor       | Pastor        | Pastor        | Pastor        | Pastor        | Chuck         | Pastor        |
| <b>Thrive</b>      |              | Pastor       |              | Gabi          |               | Pastor        |               | Gabi          |               |
| <b>Oaks</b>        |              |              |              | Chuck         |               |               |               | Chuck         |               |

## **WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH “When is a Lutheran Not a Lutheran”**

The history of early Lutheranism in North America includes the story of a remarkable family of clergy. Paul Henkel and his sons and grandsons left an indelible mark on Lutheran church life for nearly a century, beginning in the mid-1700s.

Paul Henkel was born in North Carolina and served in the Revolutionary War. He and his sons, Samuel, Philip, Ambrose, Andrew, David and Charles, established a Lutheran printing establishment at New Market, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley.

The Henkels were unapologetic about championing the Augsburg Confession. The document, written by Martin Luther's teaching colleague Philip Melancthon, was created to prove to emperor and pope that the Lutherans were authentic Christians, contrary to the claims of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the 1500s. Once it became clear that Luther's reforms would be rejected by the church hierarchy of his day, the Augsburg Confession became the identifying document uniting Lutherans all over Europe.

The Henkels were determined that the same document should be similarly embraced by Lutherans in North America. From their press came Lutheran books and literature, including copies of Martin Luther's Catechism and the Augsburg Confession. Copies were circulated all over the regions where Lutherans had already settled—New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana.

The Henkels' devotion to the Augsburg Confession was not shared by all Lutherans in the American colonies and during the early national period of the young nation's history. In Pennsylvania, Lutheran and Reformed church congregations were creating "union churches," with two parishes sharing one pastor. For obvious reasons, the Lutheran confessional documents were downplayed. When the North Carolina Synod was organized in 1803, no reference was made to Lutheran confessional writings.

In the early 1800s, a prominent Pennsylvania pastor, Samuel Simon Schmucker, proposed uniting the several Lutheran synods into a national church body. Schmucker was on record supporting ecumenical relations with non-Lutheran groups. Schmucker felt a responsibility toward the German Lutheran congregations in Pennsylvania, many of which were involved in "union church" partnerships.

He had no interest in forcing these communities to split apart. The debate was joined. "How 'Lutheran' does a Lutheran really need to be?" Schmucker said, "Not so much as to get in the way of sharing ministry with other Christians." The Henkels said, "It's very important. Lutheranism offers valuable insights you can't get anywhere else. So don't water it down."

In 1820, when Schmucker's General Synod appeared to be coming to fruition, the Henkels went into battle mode. They opposed the new national church structure because they didn't trust centralizing authority in the hands of a few people. And they didn't want the likes of Samuel Simon Schmucker exercising that authority.

Alarmed at the "confessional laxity" of the newly-created North Carolina Synod (which also supported the proposed General Synod), the Henkels worked to organize two new regional churches more committed to the Augsburg Confession. The Ohio Synod was

organized in 1818, the Tennessee Synod in 1820. Neither became reliable supporters of the General Synod.

Long after Paul Henkel had died, Schmucker circulated a document in the General Synod proposing to revise the Augsburg Confession, changing some of its articles. (The elder Henkel would have turned over in his grave.) For example, Schmucker wanted to redefine the meaning of Holy Communion. His proposed change to the Augsburg Confession would have discarded Martin Luther's insistence on Christ's "real presence" in the bread and wine, moving instead toward a Reformed understanding (declaring Christ is symbolically or spiritually present at the Eucharist). Schmucker's proposal went nowhere. Even his own synod in Pennsylvania voted against it.

Over the generations, the Henkels' point of view prevailed. Schmucker's program to Americanize Lutheranism was repudiated. The Augsburg Confession, without changes, was reaffirmed as a unifying document giving identity to Martin Luther's spiritual descendants. Part of the reason this became possible was that an increasing flood of new Lutheran immigrants continued to arrive from Europe - most of whom believed the Lutheran confessions were something worth championing. The Henkels were vindicated in their concern that Lutheranism should have a distinct identity.

The Henkel family continued to provide leadership for the growing American church into the third generation. Solomon's son, Samuel, became a physician but was also involved with translating and publishing standard Lutheran works for congregations. Philip's two sons, Ireneus and Eusebius, became Lutheran pastors in the western settlements. David's sons, Polycarp and Socrates, both became Lutheran clergy.

And the family left another legacy besides. Henkel Press was the earliest predecessor of what eventually became Fortress Press in Philadelphia and, since 1988, Augsburg Fortress Publishers in Minneapolis.

**“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”**

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHURCH RENEWAL

Four members from Reformation recently completed a very interesting 6 session course entitled "Renewing the Local Church". The course, sponsored by St. Paul Lutheran Seminary, was conducted by Rev. Brad Hales. Over 100 people participated live or via recordings representing 27 churches. The sessions were recorded should someone wish to review.

Of course, all the participating churches and individuals are part of or concerned about churches facing dwindling attendance, lack of interest from former attendees, lack of growth, and so on. Some of these issues are related to Covid, age of members, adult children going elsewhere, etc. We, at Reformation, are not alone in facing these issues as most of the mainline denomination churches are in some form or other, in need of renewal. In the LCMC over 90 percent of our churches report similar concerns.

The Good Lord's purpose for His church is to spread the Gospel and serve the community. In many ways, Reformation serves His purposes. Yet to continue to do so, we need to find new ways to connect with people, to serve our neighbor, to deliver His promise. We are limited in delivering the Good News when we have too many empty chairs and we are limited in serving community if our budget is cut back due in part to those empty seats.

Perhaps the biggest takeaways from Pastor Brad's sessions on renewal are these: 1. We want to be praying in a big way! (I have a simple prayer below that I urge you to pray daily). 2. We want to remain in His Word and celebrate the Sacraments. That is part of discipleship. His preached Word and the gift of forgiveness keep us "tuned up" for daily living, for renewal, for serving His purpose. 3. There is a need for a church, especially small ones like ours, to focus. Simply put, we don't want or need to stop what we are currently doing. Yet, we want to look at ways to consistently (weekly would be good, daily better) bring people to hear His Word, to build relationships, to make new acquaintances and begin to have some faith conversations, some healing conversations, some conversations of comfort, some ways to show God's love to people – these last four things are in fact also discipleship. An example from Pastor Brad's church and I repeat, just an example....they started a senior center in an older home that the church owned. Daily, people from the community were engaged with members of the church and the Pastor. Eventually some of these seniors joined the church. Eventually some of these seniors brought their grandkids to church...see how this works? 4. We want to have an understanding of the longer term of renewal. It is a commitment by the folks in our small church and we are mindful that His timing is not our timing, and for that matter a renewal as above described is what a church does all the time to serve His purpose!

In the coming weeks, we will be taking some time in our meetings and over our Lenten supper time to further look at ideas for renewal. Part of that is looking at the resources, the assets we already have. May the Lord bless, keep, and lead us.

The prayer from (1.) above... Lord God, we thank and praise You for Your church, Reformation Lutheran, and we ask for your direction, assistance and blessing on this church as it goes about Your call to serve Your purpose. In Jesus' name. Amen.