



Reformation Lutheran Church

**“Come and See, Learn and Rejoice, Go and Tell!”
April 2023**

“Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’ — and that he had said these things to her.” - John 20:18 –

Martin Luther once spent three days in a black depression over something that had gone wrong. On the third day his wife Katie came downstairs dressed in mourning clothes. “Who’s dead?” he asked her. “God,” she replied. Luther rebuked her, saying, “What do you mean, God is dead? God cannot die.” “Well,” she replied, “the way you’ve been acting I was sure He had!”

We fall into this very same trap. It’s our human condition. Mary, too, was in the same conundrum—until her Lord spoke her name. Then Mary’s tears turned from tears of mourning into tears of joy! She had seen Jesus suffer terribly that Friday before. She watched as the soldiers beat Jesus until he was unrecognizable. She witnessed in horror as they nailed Christ to the cross. And she heard them say that Jesus was dead. She followed as they laid him in the tomb, and the tomb was sealed shut. She knew Jesus, her Savior, Teacher, and Lord, was dead. Why wouldn’t she be mourning?

But that all changed in an instant when she heard the unmistakable voice of her Rabboni. Mary was filled with amazement and overcome with joy. She had to run and tell the other disciples what she had seen, what she had heard, and what her Lord had said to her.

“I have seen the Lord!” Can you imagine Mary’s excitement? We are called to go out and share the Good News of Jesus Christ risen from dead, just like Mary did that first Easter morning. What excitement! What joy! Jesus is not here. He is not among the dead. He is risen! May we have the same excitement and urgency as Mary to share this important news with everyone we meet: Jesus Christ is risen from the dead! Alleluia!

Prayer: Eternal Father, we give you thanks that you have risen your son Jesus Christ from the tomb, so that we might have eternal life with you. Forgive us, Lord, when we become complacent and no longer feel the excitement of this Good News. Help us to share in the excitement of Mary, that we may run and tell others of your great love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Pr.

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

May this blessed time of year fill you with joy and peace as you hear the wondrous truth of Christ’s resurrection. Let your spirit be refreshed as you take in the beauty of His creation. May His love fill your heart and home. Happy Easter!

Peace be with you, Gabi

Prayer for the Church: Heavenly Father, we know you have plans for your church – specifically for Reformation Lutheran Church – that are for your glory. The Bible says the church is your house, you dwell in the midst of your people. We ask your wisdom and support as we seek to honor your purposes for us. May Christ dwell in our hearts through faith so that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to know and share the love of Christ that surpasses all understanding. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



No birthdays this month for RLC members.

APRIL CALENDAR

Palm Sunday – April 2nd – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.; Executive Council after Service

Good Friday – April 7th – Good Friday Service – 7:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday – April 9th – Breakfast Potluck – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.

Sunday – April 16th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.; Council after Service

Sunday – April 23rd – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.

Thursday – April 27th – AARP Safe Driver’s Class – 9:00 – 4:00

Saturday – April 29th – Clean-up day – 9:00 a.m.

Sunday – April 30th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.

	April 2	April 9	April 16	April 23	April 30
Altar Guild	Wayne	Carolyn	Junior	Tammy	Wayne
Usher	Junior	Wayne	Carolyn	Junior	Wayne
Lector	Junior	Chuck	Gabi	Tammy	Karen
Sermon	Pastor	Pastor	Chuck	Pastor	Paster
Thrive	Gabi	Pastor	Wayne	Gabi	Wayne
Oaks			Chuck		Chuck

Fellowship: Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Lenten meals. It was all wonderful and much appreciated. We will have an Easter Sunday potluck breakfast starting at 9:30.

Property: Our April clean-up day will be Saturday, the 29th, 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are always welcome!

Education: Join us every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. as we learn about the differences between Lutheranism and other Christian religions around the world.

Worship and Music: Lent is drawing to an end. The month of April brings Holy Week...Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Colors in the church will change...Black on Good Friday and White for the season of Easter.

Holy Week is a string of eight days that allow us an opportunity to reflect upon just what Jesus' sacrifice on the cross launched. It starts with Palm Sunday when Jesus enters the city of Jerusalem. The week leads us through the Last Supper, His crucifixion, and ends on Easter Sunday with His resurrection. This is the basis of Christianity, His sacrifice launched the New Covenant God promised and many had prophesied throughout the Old Testament. Each day of Holy Week allows us to peek into the heart of our Savior at intimately close proximity. His love for us is reflected in every significant step toward the cross, every breath up to the last, and His resurrection. Join us; bring a friend or neighbor.

Mission and Ministry: There are no projects in the works yet. Let's see if we can find an opportunity soon to use a Thrivent card for something in the community. All ideas are welcome!

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH "Theological Fights: The Question of Predestination"

In traveling around the small towns and rural areas of the Upper Midwest, it is common to encounter areas where there are a number of different, small Lutheran churches right in the same local area, sometimes within blocks of each other. Sometimes the existence of these "neighborly" congregations can be traced to ethnic or linguistic origins; in many towns there are "Swedish" or "Norwegian" or "Danish" or "German" or "Finnish" churches. But in a number of these "clustered" situations, the existence of multiple congregations in close proximity can be traced back to theological arguments that raged among Midwestern Lutherans during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Sometimes these theological debates got so intense that they split congregations, resulting in two or more congregations where there had been only one.

We know that all things work together for good* for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified. Romans 8:28-30

The theological fight in question raged during the 1870s and 1880s over the question of predestination (or election). First, something about predestination and then about the fight among the Lutherans.

Predestination is the idea that God has selected (or predetermined) ahead of time those who will be saved. This is a doctrine that is most often associated with Reformed (Calvinist) Christians, but it is an important one for many Christians, especially Lutherans. Predestination is important because it defends the idea of grace and stresses that people are saved solely by God's grace, and not by their

works. However, predestination is a problem to some people who do not like the idea; it seems to some to be unworthy of a loving God or it may seem to negate the need for human moral action. If your salvation is pre-determined, why should you bother to be good? But then, if human moral action "counts," does that not negate the grace of God? It is a complicated and perennial theological debate. The Lutheran confessional document of the sixteenth century (that officially defined Lutheran theology) affirms predestination but does not fully define it, and Lutherans have continued to wrestle with those questions.

Beginning in 1877, this question flared up among German and Norwegian Lutherans in the Midwest. The dispute involved different German groups, the Missouri Synod in opposition to the Ohio and Iowa Synods, and then later among Norwegian Lutherans. An American Lutheran historian has explained it this way:

The man who believes in Christ and his atoning merit is ... predestined to be saved. But shall we say that God's predestination is the cause of his faith and his salvation, or shall we say that his faith is the cause of his predestination? The Missourians took the first alternative ... [insisting] that a man cannot believe in Christ unless God causes him to do so [Missouri's opponents] took the second alternative and insisted that God elects man to salvation "in view of his faith" in the merits of Christ.' (Abdel Ross Wentz. *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*. revised edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press. 1964), 206)

To its opponents, the Missouri Synod's position sounded like fatalism and, even worse, like the position of the Calvinists (an irony, because the founders of Missouri were staunch opponents of Calvinist theology). The position of the Ohio and Iowa Synods, that God foresees (foreknowledge) peoples' faith and grants salvation on that basis, seemed to the Missourians to be dangerously close to "works righteousness" or the idea that humans can earn their own salvation. This battle raged in among German-American Lutherans for at least a dozen years and caused a long-running rift between these synods.

Among Norwegian-American Lutherans, this fight divided the Norwegian Synod and caused quite a few congregations to split over the issue. The main part of the Norwegian Synod sided with the Missouri position, but a significant minority opposed it. In 1884 this minority group formed the "Anti-Missouri Brotherhood" and split from the Norwegian Synod, to join with other Norwegian Lutheran denominations in 1890 to form the United Norwegian Lutheran Church. This battle split congregations as well; in one instance, at the East Koshkonong parish outside of Madison, Wisconsin, the dissidents broke away and built a new Lutheran church literally just across the parking lot from the older congregation.

To some, all this fighting might seem ridiculous, or worse; why should Christians fight like this among themselves? And certainly church fights can, at times, be caused in part by human, sinful factors, which is wrong. But remember that theology does matter, and these Lutherans were taking theological matters seriously. Trying to understand God, and to make sure that salvation is by God's grace alone, is extremely important-important enough, at times, to fight over (within the bounds of Christian love). Sometimes a struggle can result in a clearer, stronger Christian faith.

“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”