



Reformation Lutheran Church

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

The below from a daily reflection that Rev. Dr. Jim Cavanah shares by email during Lent. I thought it quite valuable. You might remember that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was the German Lutheran pastor executed by the Nazi's a few hours short of the end of WWII.

Mark 1:35 - In the morning, while it was still dark, he [Jesus] got up and went to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

Reflection on the Word

This order and discipline in life must be sought and found in the morning prayer. It will stand the test at work. Prayer offered in early morning is decisive for the entire day. The wasted time we are ashamed of, the temptations we succumb to, the weakness and discouragement in our work, the disorder and lack of discipline in our thinking and in our dealings with other people – all these very frequently have their cause in our neglect of morning prayer. The ordering and scheduling of our time will become more secure when we give our priority to prayer and especially the morning prayer. – Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Pr.

“That God once loved a garden we learn in Holy writ. And seeing gardens in the Spring I well can credit it.” Winifred Mary Letts

It's interesting to me that this solemn time of the church year coincides with one of the most beautiful times of the year in nature – Spring. As we journey to the cross of Good Friday over the next several weeks, look around outside. Take in the sights, smells, and sounds of nature's rebirth. Be reminded that, “... God so loved the world.” The new life we see in nature all around us is also IN us – the beautiful new life we experience because of our faith in Christ Jesus. May this Lenten season stir your heart and renew your spirit to show the beauty of His love and care to each other, and those in our community.

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.



March 2nd – Eli Ervin

MARCH CALENDAR

Wednesday – March 1st – Dinner – 6:00 p.m.; Service – 7:00 p.m.

Sunday – March 5th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.

Tuesday – March 7th – Dinner – 6:00 p.m.; Service – 7:00 p.m. – Guest – Rev. Siimon Haamon from Estonia

Saturday – March 11th – SPRING FORWARD! Turn clocks AHEAD one hour before you go to bed.

Sunday – March 12th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.; Council after service

Wednesday – March 15th – Dinner – 6:00 p.m.; Service – 7:00 p.m.

Sunday – March 19th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday – March 22nd – Dinner – 6:00 p.m.; Service – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday – March 25th – Clean-up day – 9:00 a.m.

Sunday – March 26th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday – March 29th – Dinner – 6:00 p.m.; Service – 7:00 p.m.

	March 5	March 12	March 19	March 26
Altar Guild	Wayne	Carolyn	Junior	Tammy
Usher	Junior	Wayne	Carolyn	Junior
Lector	Chuck	Wayne	Gabi	Lynne
Sermon	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor	Gabi
Thrive	Gabi	Pastor	Wayne	Gabi
Oaks		Chuck		Chuck

Fellowship: It's Lenten soup and service time! Each Wednesday, there will be a meal (usually, but not limited to, soup!) starting at 6:00 p.m. We have some great cooks, so grab a friend and come join us! Lenten service starts at 7:00. There is one exception! We will meet Tuesday, March 7th instead of the 8th, to welcome guest speaker, Rev. Siimon Haamon from Estonia. Please join us!

Property: Our March clean-up day will be Saturday, the 25th, 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are welcome!

Education: It's Bible Study time! 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: We are well into the season of Lent with weekly Lenten services and our normal service on Sunday morning. We are also well into our Bible class of studying the various Christian denominations. If you haven't been coming you are missing a very interesting presentation.

Ask yourself...what is the greatest event in human history? Is it the birth of Jesus or the resurrection of Jesus? That is a difficult question to determine, but without the resurrection of Jesus there would be no reason for the Christian church and the promise of eternal life would be a hollow assurance. Lent prepares us for the celebration of that greatest day in human history which we will celebrate on April 9.

Join us...bring a friend or neighbor.

Mission and Ministry: We don't have a project in the works yet! Chuck has been in touch with a youth group at Ft. Benning. Prayerfully, there will be opportunities for us to work together on some projects. Aside from that, let's see if we can find an opportunity soon to use a Thrivent card for something in the community. All ideas are welcome!

Fun Bible Facts: Shortest chapter in the Bible – Psalm 117 (two verses). Longest chapter in the Bible – Psalm 119 (176 verses). Center of the Bible – Psalm 118. There are 594 chapters before Psalm 118. There are 594 chapters after Psalm 118. Center Verse of the Bible – Psalm 118:8 (594 + 594 = 1188). *“It is better to trust in the Lord than put confidence in man.” Psalm 118:8*

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH “Lutherans in Madagascar”

If you were asked to list some of the largest and fastest growing Lutheran churches in the world, you would probably not think first of the Malagasy Lutheran Church on the African island of Madagascar. But to the surprise of many, the Malagasy Lutheran Church is, at three million members, the third largest Lutheran church in Africa (only the Lutheran churches in Ethiopia and Tanzania have more members) and one of the fastest growing Lutheran churches in the world.

Madagascar as a country is located on an island east of the southern tip of Africa. In many ways its isolation from that continent has meant that it is a country of unique plants and animals, and a very distinctive human culture, with influences from Indonesia and Africa, as well as Arab traders. The Kingdom of Madagascar was taken over as a French colony in 1895 and became an independent country again in 1960. Roman Catholic missionaries began work on the island as early as the sixteenth century, and Protestant missions were begun in the nineteenth century. Today the Malagasy people are about equally divided between those who practice traditional religious and those who are Christians (Protestants and Roman Catholics are about even). Many Malagasy people combine traditional beliefs and practices with Christianity.

Lutheran missionaries from Norway began to arrive in the country in 1866, and began their work at the southern part of the country. Their mission was greatly assisted by two factors: the conversion of the royal court to Christianity in 1869, and the translation of the Bible and other materials into the Malagasy language. In 1888 Norwegian-American missionaries arrived in the country and began to work in the southwestern part of the island, beginning an American Lutheran presence on the island that still continues. Protestant mission efforts were at a disadvantage to the Roman Catholics during the French colonial period, but the Lutheran mission churches grew steadily, along with medical and educational outreach. The two missions cooperated, and in 1950 their 1,800 congregations were united in the newly-formed Malagasy Lutheran Church (in Malagasy, Fiangonana Loterana Malagasy or FLM), which became a part of the

Lutheran World Federation. The first Lutheran seminary on the island was established in 1871 in Fiananarntsoa, and Malagasy Lutherans have been educated as pastors, teachers, and catechists there and at other schools of the church. The first Malagasy pastor to head the church was elected in 1961, a year after the country's independence.

The Malagasy Lutheran church has grown rapidly since independence, with membership increasing from about 840,000 in 1988 to three million today. The FLM has a large number of catechists, especially in the rural areas, and seeks to expand from its base in the southern and central parts of the island into the northern parts, where Christianity is much less strong. As with many other churches in Africa, the Malagasy Lutheran Church is strongly positioned with a network of schools and educational institutions across the island. It also runs an important system of social service agencies (hospitals, clinics, and care facilities) as well as development projects to better the lives of the Malagasy people (in cooperation with its mission partners in the Lutheran World Federation). The FLM is an important part of the fabric of this country, which now numbers over twenty-two million people.

One of the distinct features of Christianity in Madagascar is a deeply rooted tradition of healing and exorcism among the people in what is known as the Fifohazana movement. This indigenous revival movement began in 1894 with a vision seen by a man named Rainisoalambo, who was an aristocrat and traditional healer in the southern part of the island. Rainisoalambo was told to put away his traditional idols and become a Christian. He initiated an awakening movement that has permeated many areas of Malagasy Christian life, including the FLM. This movement concentrates on spiritual healing, exorcisms, service to the poor, Bible study, and fervent witnessing to others. In the Fifohazana community centers, people are trained to become "shepherds" (mpiangady) who take care of the sick and handicapped in their communities. Others, called "apostles" are trained to take the gospel message into areas of the country where Christianity is not well established. This strong spiritual emphasis is important for the health of the Malagasy Lutheran Church and its recent growth. Many of its church leaders have come out of the Fifohazana movement. There are times where this movement has come into conflict with more traditional Christian church systems, but Christian leaders work to ensure that they cooperate together for the good of the Christian movement in the country.

The Malagasy Republic is one of the poorest countries on the planet and faces many challenges. Yet the Christians in the country, including Malagasy Lutherans, are working to support the people of the country and the growth of the Christian message among them.

“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”