



# Reformation Lutheran Church

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

*“In the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 3:20b-21*

In many Lutheran churches, the baptismal font has an octagonal shape to it. I must admit that for many years, I did not know why. I just assumed it was a certain preferred style during a certain time in history. It turns out that there is a significant theological reason to the structure of the fonts. The verses above from 1 Peter 3 serve as a backdrop and explanation as well. A baptismal font that is octagonal in shape has eight sides, naturally. The eight sides represent the eight persons that were spared during the flood in the days of Noah. Thus, it makes a direct connection to the life-saving gift of baptism.

Sadly, many have trouble seeing Holy Baptism as God’s work. Our human brokenness would rather see Holy Baptism as a human work, “our work.” Sinful and broken humans desire to turn it into an offering to God, instead of recognizing it as a gracious gift of God that restores life, forgives sins, and brings salvation. Holy Baptism saves you, as St. Peter says (see v. 21). Unfortunately, some insist that it has no such power. Rather, it is viewed that the human will has made it’s solemn choice, it’s decision to follow God and to forsake all, rather than fall away from Him.

As Lutherans we understand this “man-made” idea of Holy Baptism to be dangerous. It places us sinful human beings in the role of God, when in reality we have no power over our salvation whatsoever.

Holy Baptism is a gift of grace, not a human work. “Baptism, which corresponds to (the flood in the days of Noah), now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (v. 21).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of grace you bestow on us through baptism. Grant that we would be kept safe in the holy ark of the Christian church. Renew us daily in the promise we receive at our baptism, that we might be united in a resurrection like Christ’s. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Pr.

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*"Spring is God's way of saying, 'One more time!' " - Robert Orben*

Springtime! Everything in nature is bright, fresh, growing, and renewing. We often do some serious spring cleaning and tend to chores we’ve neglected over the colder months. We also want everything to be fresh, clean, and renewed. What do we do for ourselves personally though? How do we refresh our souls and renew our spirit? How do we “clean up” some bad habits we may have fallen into? I think being in God’s word and among fellow believers as often as possible are good ways to begin. Come and see and share in worship! Learn about God’s grace and mercy and rejoice in his forgiveness and love of you. Go and tell others that they too may feel their spirits lifted and feel God working to renew them each and every day. 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.

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**May 3<sup>rd</sup> – Sondra Coulter**

<b>MAY CALENDAR</b>
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**Sunday – May 7th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m**

**Sunday – Mother’s Day - May 14th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.**

**Sunday – May 21st – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.; Council after Service**

**Saturday – May 27th – Clean-up day – 9:00 a.m.**

**Sunday – May 28th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.**

	May 7	May 14	May 21	May 28
<b>Altar Guild</b>	Carolyn	Junior	Tammy	Amy
<b>Usher</b>	Wayne	Carolyn	Junior	Wayne
<b>Lector</b>	Amy	Chuck	Gabi	Wayne
<b>Sermon</b>	Pastor	Pastor	Wayne	Pastor
<b>Thrive</b>	Gabi	Pastor	Wayne	Gabi
<b>Oaks</b>	Chuck			

**Fellowship:** Let’s all think about something we can do together at the end of the month or the beginning of summer – perhaps a cookout at church? We could combine that with fun outdoor games and or something. Maybe a movie and snack in the evening? Something to think about.

**Property:** Our May clean-up day will be Saturday, the 27<sup>th</sup>, 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:** We continue with the season of Easter, but toward the end of May we have two more very important days in the Christian calendar. On May 18 we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord, and on May 28 we celebrate Pentecost. On Pentecost Sunday the colors in the church will be red.

Ascension Day is the 40th day of Easter. It occurs 39 days after Easter Sunday. It is a Christian holiday that commemorates Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven. Ascension Day is one of the earliest Christian festivals, dating back to the year 68. The New Testament tells us Jesus Christ met several times with his disciples during the 40 days after his resurrection to instruct them on how to carry out his teachings...then on the 40th day he took them to the Mount of Olives, where they watched as he ascended to heaven. Ascension Day marks the end of the Easter season and occurs ten days before Pentecost.

Pentecost takes place on the 50th day after Easter Sunday. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, as described in the Book of Acts. Pentecost is one of the Great feasts of the Church. There is a "mighty rushing wind" and "tongues as of fire" appear. The gathered disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other tongues. In Christian tradition, this event represents fulfillment of the promise that Christ will baptize his followers with the Holy Spirit.

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 "Germans from Russia in US Lutheranism"**

Catherine II the Great, czarina of Russia, began life in Germany (1729) as a Prussian princess. In 1745 she married the designated heir to the Russian throne, Peter, and was baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church. Peter became Czar Peter III in early 1762 but abdicated six months later, and Catherine assumed the Imperial throne. She had ambitious plans for Russia and initiated immediate reforms, promoting education, improving trade, and inviting immigrants who had farming skills to settle on open land in Russia's south. In 1762 she issued an edict inviting people (except Jews) from all the countries of Europe to settle in the lower Volga frontier. The first edict lured few immigrants, but a second one in 1763 offered specific benefits: Keep your language and cultural/religious tradition, pay no taxes, govern your communities without Russian control, do no military service, and own land in perpetuity.

The first group of German immigrants reached their Volga destination in 1764, and by 1798 there were more than 38,000 Germans in Russia. Later large numbers of Germans settled in the Odessa region north of the Black Sea. These colonists formed communities largely on specific religious affiliation: Lutheran, Mennonite, Reformed, or Roman Catholic. All told, 1.7 million Germans, seventy-three percent of them Lutherans, settled in Russia mostly along the Volga River and north of the Black Sea. When Catherine died in 1796, Alexander renewed her pledges in 1804 and 1813. But there was a growing antagonism to the privileges given the German settlers spread across the empire, who were seen as an economic and political threat. The freedoms promised by Catherine were systematically removed, and by 1871 a decree repealed the privileges the colonists enjoyed for over a century.

These actions were seen as an unconscionable breach of faith by the German colonists. Many of them had a tradition of anti-militarism, and they were particularly distressed when a six-year military service law came into force. The new military conscription unleashed the first large wave of emigration of Germans from Russia, chiefly to America. To this day, photos of young Germans in Russian military uniforms found in American homes of their descendants reveal that some families were forced to yield to the Russian draft before emigrating.

The Homestead Act, adopted in 1862, was designed to open the U.S. Midwest for extensive settlement. Many immigrant Germans from Russia took advantage of this offer and began life in their new country on 160 acres of farmland, typically in territories of the Great Plains-Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. The German exodus from Russia began in the early 1870s when about forty families settled in the vicinity of Yankton, South Dakota.

As they had in Russia, the Germans coming to America usually filled new communities here with people of the same faith identity. One of the first things Lutheran Germans from Russia did when settling in their new community was to build a church, usually from the memory of their church back in the homeland. The German language was dominant in congregations until suspicions created by World War I pressured many to switch entirely to English. Yet, in some communities the use of German in church continued as late as World War II.

Differing church customs and traditions at times made harmony in one united congregation difficult. Lutheran congregations of Germans from Russia were known to split over doctrinal issues and affiliate with different branches of Lutheranism. Early congregations joined the General Synod, the Ohio Synod, or, in the Dakotas, the Iowa Synod, which helped form the 1930 American Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod also gained congregations of German Lutherans from Russia.

The Great Depression of the 1930s caused immeasurable problems for many of the Lutheran Germans from Russia. The terrible dust storms during this time caused widespread crop failure year after year. Large groups of Russian Germans from the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado moved to Washington, California, and Texas. Others who survived the Depression and the dust storms became prosperous where they were located. They preserved their ethnic identity undergirded by a staunch faith in God, worked very hard, determined to create a decent livelihood from the good earth. Their farming practices became more mechanized. Rural electrification transformed their lives. The rural one-room school house was replaced by consolidated schools to which farm children were bussed. Some of their children who grew up on prairie farms left their homes and moved to larger towns and cities.

As older generations of Germans from Russia have passed on, an entire folk culture is disappearing, leaving only a memory among their descendants. However, the influence from the Lutheran Germans from Russia in the U.S. is deeply woven into the warp and woof of America's fabric, especially among Lutherans.

**“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”**