



Reformation Lutheran Church

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

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.’” -Matthew 16:24-25

Dietrich Bonhoeffer is well-known among many Lutherans. He was a German-Lutheran pastor and theologian, who died at the hands of Nazis in Germany during World War II. Before his death, Bonhoeffer wrote his work “Cost of Discipleship.” He writes how Christians today have taken advantage of God’s grace, referring to it as “cheap grace.” He says, “Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

God’s grace came at an expensive price: the life his only son Jesus Christ. So often we lose sight of the great cost our God paid on our behalf. So often we want to water down God’s grace, making it more palatable. Discipleship, following Jesus, is not easy. It is a life of sacrifice, and Jesus doesn’t try to pretend that it’s going to be easy for us. His words are plain and simple: deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.

We are tempted to tell ourselves that it’s ok to miss worship because God will understand; he will forgive us. We want to sweep our sin under the rug and pretend it’s not there. What’s the harm, really? The harm is huge! When we treat God’s amazing gift of grace so frivolously, not only do we diminish the depth of God’s love for us, but we also avoid any form of repentance. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness of our sins. And so ultimately, we have put ourselves in a dangerous position.

God has called us to follow him in every way. We are called to act out of love and compassion for our neighbor. We are called to forgive one another as God forgives us through the sacrifice of Jesus. We are called to make sacrifices in order to make God a priority in our lives. In the moment it might seem difficult, but as Dietrich Bonhoeffer also says, “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow Him, but cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

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May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.
Romans 15:5-7

What a joyful blessing to have new friends join our flock here at RLC! On Sunday, August 27, we welcomed Dick and Teresa Donovan, Amy Becker, Cliff Christian, and Mr. Kenneth Ramming. God is at work in our church! Let’s continue to praise Him and seek His will as we work together to further His kingdom in our community. Peace be with you, Gabi



September 18th – Donna Maness

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Sunday – September 3rd – Service – 10:30 a.m.

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

Sunday – September 17th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m.

Saturday – September 23rd – Clean-up Day – 9:00 a.m.

Sunday – September 24th – Bible Study – 9:30 a.m.; Service – 10:30 a.m. September birthday celebrations after service.

	Sept 3	Sept 10	Sept 17	Sept 24
Altar Guild	Amy	Wayne	Carolyn	Junior
Usher	Junior	Carolyn	Wayne	Junior
Lector	Wayne	Gabi	Lynne	Tammy
Sermon	Pastor	Pastor	Gabi	Pastor
Thrive	Wayne	Pastor	Gabi	Wayne
Oaks	Chuck		Chuck	

Fellowship: We really don't have anything planned at the moment other than our September birthday celebration that will be on the 24th after service.

Property: Our September clean-up day will be Saturday, the 30th, 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are always welcome!

Education: We will begin our Bible class Sunday, September 10, starting at 9:30 a.m. It will be based on the book, *The Sword and The Mask – Building an Antifragile Approach to Spiritual Warfare* by The Rev. Dr. Jon C. Furgeson. Also, a prerequisite for the class is to read or listen to the YouTube audio of *This Present Darkness* by Frank Peretti. *“For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness...”* Ephesians 6:12

Worship and Music: September 17 is National Back to Church Sunday. It's an opportunity for us to join thousands of churches across the country and for us to reach the community around. With summer ending and school starting again, it's the perfect event to reach out to those who stopped coming or have never been to church. Do you have a friend or neighbor that doesn't or hasn't been attending church? What a great opportunity to invite them and bring them along.

How many of us really remember the "what does this mean" from our days in catechism class? Here is this month's review.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT – Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN – We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.

Mission and Ministry: We have several Thrivent projects that we've discussed. Two are currently in the beginning stages – food for Focus Food Bank and help for House of Heroes. Their specific need is for paint and paint supplies. Remember, all ideas are welcome!

WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH “Lutherans in Papua New Guinea”

Lutherans literally can be found all around the world, in every kind of culture and ethnic setting. Perhaps the most distinctive Lutheran success story can be found in the southeast Asian country of Papua New Guinea, where Christians now number ninety-five percent of the entire country, and Lutherans comprise almost twenty percent of that population. This in a place where Christianity was unknown until 130 years ago, and whose terrain and settlement patterns have made Christian expansion very difficult.

The country of Papua New Guinea occupies the eastern half of the large island of New Guinea, just north of Australia. (The eastern half is the Indonesian province of Papua.) It is an island of very rough and mountainous terrain, and even today over eighty percent of its people live in tribal villages in isolated rural areas, often quite independent of each other. This is a country of 850 different languages and over a thousand different cultural groups, where many people live traditional lifestyles. Although European explorers encountered this region in the sixteenth century, western colonialism only came to the island in 1884, when the island was divided between Holland (west), Germany (northeast), and Britain (southeast). Even then, colonial administration touched only the coastal regions of the island.

German missionaries from the Neuendettlsau and Rhenish mission societies began work in the German territory in 1886 with pioneering pastor Johannes Flier!, who worked in New Guinea from 1886 to 1930; he was soon joined by other colleagues from Germany. Though these missionaries made limited progress, the terrain and culture made it difficult at first for them to extend their work into the rural areas. In 1908 the first New Guinean evangelists were sent out, beginning a long pattern of indigenous leadership, given the geographical situation. They adopted a successful pattern of evangelism that focused on the conversion of entire villages and tribal units. so that Christian converts would not be isolated from their families and tribes. Evangelists postponed the baptism of individual new converts until the entire social unit was ready to adopt Christianity. Local New Guinean congregations were encouraged to send out Christian workers to bring the Christian message to other local communities. Slowly the Lutheran missions began to move into the highland rural areas. but conditions there were very difficult. especially for Western missionaries. Portions of the Bible were translated into the larger local languages.

As a part of the First World War, Australian troops took over the German territory in 1914; German missionaries were removed, and not allowed to return until 1927. American Lutheran missionaries from the Iowa Synod came to New Guinea to fill the void left by the expulsion of the German missionaries, and those Americans remained on the island through the twentieth century. Lutheran missionaries also came from the Lutheran church in Australia because of British and Australian administration of the region. Another disruption occurred during the Second World War, but American and German missionaries were able to return after 1945. Missionaries from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod began work in the Engaregion in 1948, and there was a successful post-war expansion of Lutheranism on the island.

The post-war era saw the expansion of Lutheran educational institutions on the island, especially schools to train pastors and evangelists, and other programs for social workers, teachers, and lay parish assistants. Although there were Bible translations into a number of different local languages, the linguistic challenges of work in so many different languages was immense. During and after the Second World War a new common language, Nee-Melanesian (commonly known as Pidgin) gained widespread acceptance; though much of the church education is in English, this new language remains important, and the Bible has been translated into it.

The Lutheran Mission in New Guinea (LMNG) was formed in 1953 to coordinate the Western missionary work on the island, and in 1956 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in New Guinea was formed (at independence the word "Papua" was added). The Missouri Synod mission formed the Gutnuis (Good News) Lutheran Church in 1961. With the country's independence in 1975 both churches became autonomous, and both are now independent members of the Lutheran World Federation.

As with many newly-independent countries, Papua New Guinea faces challenging social and economic problems, especially since the twentieth-century intrusion of Western culture is such a clash with traditional Papua New Guinean society. The Lutheran churches continue to receive grants from the LWF for religious and development work, and some Western personnel continue to assist these churches. Currently, the population of Papua New Guinea is about seven million people, with about ninety-five percent Christian. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea has about 1.2 million members, while the Gutnuis Lutheran Church-Papua New Guinea has 150,000 members. Quite an accomplishment for 130 years! With God anything is possible!

“THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE”