



# Reformation Lutheran Church

**“Come and See, Learn and Rejoice, Go and Tell!”  
May 2025**

*“If God then gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” - Acts 11:17 -*

Since the beginning, the Christian church has had factions, groups that disagree with each other. Sometimes those disagreements have been over silly things, sometimes over extremely important things. Today there are around 40,000 different Christian denominations.

The first division in the church had to do with Jews and Gentiles. These two groups of people had never worshipped together before. In fact, they weren’t even supposed to eat meals together. And now, they were all together in the church. The early Christians had a hard time figuring out how to deal with that. Some people thought the two groups could each continue to do their own thing. Others thought that the customs of one of the groups should become the customs of everyone. Others couldn’t really see what all the fuss was about.

This disagreement got quite unpleasant in the early church. The different sides accused each other of not teaching the right things. They accused each other of not understanding what Jesus had come to do. They accused each other of blindly clinging to their own traditions.

Eventually the leaders of the church came to understand that the distinctions they were making such a big deal about just didn’t make sense. What mattered was that God had given them all the same gift, the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. It didn’t matter what kinds of foods they ate. It didn’t matter who their parents were. It didn’t matter if they washed their hands a certain way or observed all the laws of the Old Testament. What mattered was that Jesus had given them new life — everlasting life.

The same gift that Jesus gave to those first Christians is the gift he gives to us. We have all sorts of different customs and traditions. We disagree on things that are important and things that are silly. But finally, what unites all of God’s chosen ones is that we have been made right with him through Jesus. We have been given the gift of salvation, not because of our merit, but because Christ decided to give it.

Pr.

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**Mission and Ministry Outreach:** Our current project is providing food to the FOCUS food bank. I’m always looking for ideas, so please share if you hear of any needs in the community!

**Education:** We continue our Sunday Bible Study at 9:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall, covering the Epistles and Revelation. Please join us!

**Property:** Our May clean-up day will be Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup> 9:00 a.m. Helping hands are always welcome!

**Fellowship:** Thank you to all who brought food for our Easter lunch. Everything was yummy as usual! We currently don’t have any special fellowship times planned, but as always, all ideas are welcome!

## MAY CALENDAR

**Sunday – May 4<sup>th</sup> – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service**

**Sunday – May 11<sup>th</sup> – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service**

**Sunday – May 18<sup>th</sup> – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service; Council after service**

**Tuesday – May 20<sup>th</sup> – 11:30 a.m. Lutheran Men's Lunch**

**Sunday – May 25<sup>th</sup> – 9:15 a.m. Bible Study; 10:30 a.m. Service**

**Saturday – May 31<sup>st</sup> – Clean-up Day – 9:00 a.m.**

|                      | <b>May 4</b> | <b>May 11</b> | <b>May 18</b> | <b>May 25</b> |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Altar Guild</b>   | Amy          | Tammy         | Junior        | Carolyn       |
| <b>Usher/Greeter</b> | Junior       | Carolyn       | Amy           | Junior        |
| <b>Lector</b>        | Gabi         | Amy           | Chuck         | Wayne         |
| <b>Music</b>         | Amy          | Amy           | Amy           | Amy           |
| <b>Children Time</b> | Pat          | Pat           | Pat           | Pat           |
| <b>Sermon</b>        | Pastor       | Wayne         | Pastor        | Pastor        |
| <b>Bible Study</b>   | Pastor       | Amy           | Tammy         | Pastor        |
| <b>Thrive</b>        | Wayne        | Gabi          | Wayne         | Gabi          |
| <b>Oaks</b>          | Chuck        | Wayne         | Pastor        | Chuck         |

### **COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

Easter Sunday is passed, but the season of Easter continues. Jesus has made several appearances to the disciples and is getting them ready to spread the message of Easter. These eleven ordinary men accepted that mission and changed the world.

These men had faults and character flaws...remarkably ordinary as they were...but they carried on a ministry after Jesus' ascension that left an indelible impact on the world. Their ministry continues to influence us today. God graciously empowered and used these men to inaugurate the spread of the gospel message and to turn the world upside down. Ordinary men...people like you and me...became the instruments by which Christ's message was carried to the ends of the earth. That mission to spread the Gospel is still our mission today.

Let's build Reformation Lutheran Church...why not bring a friend or neighbor with you on Sunday.

Chuck Hunsaker, Council President

## **WE CONTINUE OUR STUDY OF LUTHERAN HISTORY WITH “Lutherans from the Baltic”**

The Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have a history of Lutheranism going back to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. This region was the last area of Europe to be “christianized,” which occurred in areas as late as the fourteenth century, often by means of crusading warrior monks known as the Teutonic knights. The German influence in this region meant that Lutheranism began to infiltrate the region as early as the 1520s, especially in the cities. Lutheranism took root in the region during the sixteenth century, especially in the two northern countries, Estonia and Latvia, and among German settlers in Lithuania. Though the Roman Catholic counter-Reformation challenged the Lutheran movement, the Swedish occupation of Estonia and Latvia in the seventeenth century meant that Lutheranism in those countries was officially established by the state; Lutheranism in Lithuania remained a minority group within a decidedly Roman Catholic country. Starting in the eighteenth century, Russia came to control all the countries of this region; the Lutherans were generally allowed to maintain their own congregations and church structures, but sometimes only with difficulty.

Immigrants to North America from the Baltic region began to come rather late in the nineteenth century, settling in the East and Midwest, especially in industrial and mining areas where there were jobs. Baltic Lutherans tended to be scattered around the country and had few, if any, pastors to lead them. Established American Lutheran denominations began to reach out to these scattered Baltic Lutherans in the 1890s, but were limited by language barriers. In 1896 the Missouri Synod ordained a Latvian pastor. Hans Rebane, who began to minister to widely scattered populations of Latvians and Estonians, from Boston to South Dakota and up into Canada. Augmented by a newly-arrived Latvian ministerial colleague, they formed Lutheran congregations within the Missouri Synod as a “foreign-language” mission of that church. The Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania also sponsored outreach to Latvians in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston through the efforts of two immigrant pastors. Peter and John Steik, Eastern districts of the Missouri Synod sponsored Lithuanian Lutheran pastors and congregations, also on the East coast, beginning in 1907. A few scattered Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian Lutheran congregations were formed in North America, but there were not enough of them to form their own distinct Lutheran denominations, and these congregations continued to be supported by and attached to existing Lutheran groups.

With the dissolution of the Russian Empire in 1917, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania became independent countries in their own rights, and, although the Russian communists attempted to force them into the Soviet Union, they resisted this pressure. Freed from Russian control, the Baltic Lutheran churches gained strength and moved toward a new national identity. This window of independence was short-lived, however, and in 1940 the Russian army invaded the Baltic countries and made them a part of the Soviet Union. The German invasion of Russia in 1941 brought the region temporarily under German occupation, but the Russians regained control in 1944. Significant numbers of Estonian, Latvians, and Lithuanians fled their countries in advance of the Russian troops and became refugees in Germany and Sweden, where they formed ethnic Lutheran communities in exile. Displaced Baltic Lutheran pastors served their populations in the refugee camps in Germany, and when these refugees began to be resettled outside of Germany, the pastors followed, and formed ethnic congregations. Many Baltic refugees settled in the United States and Canada after World War II, and new ethnic congregations-Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian-were formed in North America. To serve the scattered congregations in North America, South America, Australia, and Europe, they formed ethnic Lutheran churches “in exile,” which became part of the Lutheran World Federation.

Currently, the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad, headquartered in Sweden, has about 9,000 members in congregations in North America; the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad has about 12,000 members in North America; and the Lithuanian Lutheran Church in the Diaspora has about 5,000 members in North America.

These ethnic Baltic Lutheran congregations in North America served as both an ethnic haven for the refugees, and a way to transition to their new countries. Although many refugees had hopes of returning to their home countries someday, the Russian occupation made this impossible. When the Baltic countries declared their independence again after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, relations were re-established between the churches abroad and their Lutheran counterparts in the Baltic, which had suffered greatly under communist rule. These diaspora Baltic Lutherans have attempted to help restore Lutheranism in the Baltic countries, but there have also been tensions between these groups- in Latvia, for example, over the question of the ordination of women. Baltic Lutherans in North America are yet another part of the Lutheran mosaic on this continent.

**THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE.**