



Reformation Lutheran Church

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

A Christian is Duty-Bound to Forgive

As a pastor, often when I preach about forgiveness, someone (especially at our chapel services) will catch up to me after worship saying, “I hear what you’re saying about forgiveness, but” It seems to be our natural inclination to want to find a loophole around Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness. Perhaps that is because it is one of the hardest things for us to do in this life of faith. It’s no wonder that upon hearing this instruction, the disciples said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” Please, help us! We can’t do this on our own!

And isn’t that the point? On our own, we do not have the ability or the will to forgive the sins that others commit against us. Our pride and our feelings are at stake. It’s so much easier to hold on to grudges and be angry than it is to let it all go and be free of it. But Jesus knows that carrying a grudge is a burden on us. He simply wants us to be free from all distractions so that we might live life abundantly and in that joyful “shalom” that comes only from the God who forgives without ceasing.

Luther wrote about this in his explanation of the Lord’s Prayer:

For just as we daily sin much against God, and yet He forgives everything through grace, so we, too, must ever forgive our neighbor who does us injury, violence, and wrong, shows malice toward us, etc. If, therefore, you do not forgive, then do not think that God forgives you; but if you forgive, you have this consolation and assurance, that you are forgiven in heaven, not on account of your forgiving, for God forgives freely and without condition, out of pure grace, because He has so promised, as the Gospel teaches, but in order that He may set this up for our confirmation and assurance for a sign alongside of the promise which accords with this prayer. (Large Catechism)

And so we see that it is our duty and obligation to forgive. When we need help in that area of our lives, we simply say what the disciples said: “Lord, increase my faith!” We know we cannot do it alone, but the good news is that the Holy Spirit is always willing and ready to assist us in our duty. We cannot wiggle out of it — for we want others to know the grace of God in the same way we do.

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Mission and Ministry Outreach: We don't have a specific project in the works at the moment. I believe more opportunities do present themselves this time of year, though. We'll likely sponsor a family from school at Christmas if there is a need. I believe Wayne and Carolyn have one last FOCUS delivery as well.

One thing I'd like to be prepared for is some way to help our neighboring businesses out should there be a temporary road closure that impacts people coming easily to our building. I'd like to think about using a card to buy a BBQ lunch again for the law enforcement officers as we did before. It's not a ton of money, but every little bit helps if the BBQ place is in need. We will have to wait for more details and verification about exactly what will take place with the road. As always - all ideas are welcome!

Education: Sunday Bible Study has resumed, at 9:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. The focus of our study is “Luther’s Catechisms” from CPH’s The Lutheran Confessions Series.

Fellowship: I suggest we have a potluck meal on Reformation Sunday - October 26th. We could also do just a German meal as before (but Aldi doesn't currently sell the favored brand of Bratwurst.) We can discuss and decide one Sunday.

Several Fellowship ideas have been suggested: another game night, movie night (Chuck has several that he's mentioned,) and a talent show. There's something else for us to discuss and decide on! All sound good to me!

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

OCTOBER CALENDAR

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS TO CELEBRATE ☺

October 12th – Eric Heberlig

October 17th – Teresa Donovan

October 23rd – Pat Hunsaker

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

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

Thursday – Oct. 16 – 11:30 a.m. Lutheran Men's Lunch – Cataula Creek

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

Saturday – Oct. 25 – Clean-up Day – 9:00 a.m.

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

	Oct. 5	Oct. 12	Oct. 19	Oct. 26
Altar Guild	Junior	Tammy	Junior	Amy
Usher/Greeter	Amy	Junior	Amy	Junior
Lector	Tammy	Amy	Dick	Chuck
Music	Amy	Amy	Amy	Amy
Children Time	Pat	Pat	Pat	Pat
Sermon	Gabi	Pastor	Pastor	Pastor
Bible Study	Tammy	Tammy	Tammy	Tammy
Thrive	Gabi	Pastor	Gabi	Pastor
Oaks	Ms. Lynne	Chuck	Pastor	Chuck

COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I think you all know how much I like to use sports to emphasize a point. I came across this one recently and thought it was really special and tells a great lesson.

Thirty years ago, in Nashville, Tennessee, during the first week of January, 1996, more than 4,000 baseball coaches descended upon the Opryland Hotel for the 52nd annual ABCA's convention.

One of the speakers that year was John Scolinos. In 1996, Coach Scolinos was 78 years old and five years retired from a college coaching career that began in 1948. He shuffled to the stage to an impressive standing ovation, wearing dark polyester pants, a light blue shirt, and a string around his neck from which home plate hung — a full-sized, stark-white home plate. Seriously, I wondered, who is this guy?

After speaking for twenty-five minutes, not once mentioning the prop hanging around his neck, Coach Scolinos appeared to notice the snickering among some of the coaches. Even those who knew Coach Scolinos had to wonder exactly where he was going with this, or if he had simply forgotten about home plate since he'd gotten on stage.

Then, finally ... "You're probably all wondering why I'm wearing home plate around my neck," he said, his voice growing irascible. I laughed along with the others, acknowledging the possibility. "I may be old, but I'm not crazy. The reason I stand before you today is to share with you baseball people what I've learned in my life, what I've learned about home plate in my 78 years."

Several hands went up when Scolinos asked how many Little League coaches were in the room. "Do you know how wide home plate is in Little League?" After a pause, someone offered, "Seventeen inches?", more of a question than answer.

"That's right," he said. "How about in Babe Ruth's day? Any Babe Ruth coaches in the house?" Another long pause. "Seventeen inches?" a guess from another reluctant coach.

"That's right," said Scolinos. "Now, how many high school coaches do we have in the room?" Hundreds of hands shot up, as the pattern began to appear. "How wide is home plate in high school baseball?" "Seventeen inches," they said, sounding more confident.

"You're right!" Scolinos barked. "And you college coaches, how wide is home plate in college?" "Seventeen inches!" we said, in unison.

"Any Minor League coaches here? How wide is home plate in pro ball?" "Seventeen inches!"

"RIGHT! And in the Major Leagues, how wide home plate is in the Major Leagues? Seventeen inches!"

"SEV-EN-TEEN INCHES!" he confirmed, his voice bellowing off the walls. "And what do they do with a Big League pitcher who can't throw the ball over seventeen inches?" "They send him to Pocatello!" he hollered, drawing raucous laughter. "What they don't do is this: they don't say, 'Ah, that's okay, Jimmy. If you can't hit a seventeen-inch target? We'll make it eighteen inches or nineteen inches. We'll make it twenty inches so you have a better chance of hitting it. If you can't hit that, let us know so we can make it wider still, say twenty-five inches.'"

"Coaches... what do we do when your best player shows up late to practice? or when your team rules forbid facial hair and a guy shows up unshaven? What if he gets caught drinking? Do we hold him accountable? Or do we change the rules to fit him? Do we widen home plate?"

The chuckles gradually faded as four thousand coaches grew quiet, the fog lifting as the old coach's message began to unfold. He turned the plate toward himself and, using a Sharpie, began to draw something. When he turned it toward the crowd, point up, a house was revealed, complete with a freshly drawn door and two windows. "This is the problem in our homes today. With our marriages, with the way we parent our kids. With our discipline. We don't teach accountability to our kids, and there is no consequence for failing to meet standards. We just widen the plate!"

Then, to the point at the top of the house he added a small American flag. "This is the problem in our schools today. The quality of our education is going downhill fast and teachers have been stripped of the tools they need to be successful, and to educate and discipline our young people. We are allowing others to widen home plate! Where is that getting us?"

Silence. He replaced the flag with a Cross. "And this is the problem in the Church, where powerful people in positions of authority have taken advantage of young children, only to have such an atrocity swept under the rug for years. Our church leaders are widening home plate for themselves! And we allow it."

"And the same is true with our government. Our so-called representatives make rules for us that don't apply to themselves. They take bribes from lobbyists and foreign countries. They no longer serve us. And we allow them to widen home plate! We see our country falling into a dark abyss while we just watch."

I was amazed. At a baseball convention where I expected to learn something about curve balls and bunting and how to run better practices, I had learned something far more valuable. From an old man with home plate strung around his neck, I had learned something about life, about myself, about my own weaknesses and about my responsibilities as a leader. I had to hold myself and others accountable to that which I knew to be right, lest our families, our faith, and our society continue down an undesirable path.

"If I'm lucky," Coach Scolinos concluded, "you will remember one thing from this old coach today. It is this: "If we fail to hold ourselves to a higher standard, a standard of what we know to be right; if we fail to hold our spouses and our children to the same standards, if we are unwilling or unable to provide a consequence when they do not meet the standard; and if our schools & churches & our government fail to hold themselves accountable to those they serve, there is but one thing to look forward to ..."

With that, he held home plate in front of his chest, turned it around, and revealed its dark black backside, "...We have dark days ahead!" His message was clear: "Coaches, keep your players—no matter how good they are—your own children, your churches, your government, and most of all, keep yourself at seventeen inches.

In LCMC, we must continue to not widen the plate.

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

Chuck Hunsaker, Council President