**The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Lindy, Nebraska**

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**The Rod and Staff**



**April 2017**

**A Series on the Lutheran Reformation: Justification by Faith**

We continue in this month of April with our series on the Lutheran Reformation. This year, 2017, marks the five hundredth anniversary of the movement that began in 1517, when Martin Luther and his colleagues began the work of refocusing the Church of their time on the central message of the Christian faith: the righteousness of God given to us through Jesus Christ, received through faith.

Where we left off last month, it was the year 1510. Luther was a monk, a friar, who had returned to Germany after his visit to the holy city of Rome. His “father superior,” John Staupitz, the Vicar General of the Augustinian Order in Erfurt, had commissioned Luther to walk from Erfurt to Rome as an official representative of the Augustinian Order. While Luther was in Rome, his eyes were opened to reality; the city of Rome, known as the holy city of St. Peter, was actually filled with corruption and immorality. Even many of the priests and monks in Rome lived shameful lives.

Back home, Luther continued his spiritual struggle. His logic was that since he was a sinner, God who is righteous must punish sin. He felt that the only way to escape was to rid himself of his sins. Only then could he find peace.

Hence, Luther was rather hard on himself. At one point, it is said that he spent six hours in confession, listing off all of the sins he could remember committing. His father superior and mentor John Staupitz admired Luther’s zeal, but felt that Luther was missing the most important thing. He encouraged Luther to see another side of God. God is not only filled with judgment; God is also filled with mercy. By overly focusing on his every weakness, Luther was missing the bigger picture of God’s love for him.

Staupitz felt that Luther could benefit from a new environment, and he also knew that the best way that one can learn about something is to become a teacher. So, he sent Luther to the backwater town of Wittenberg, which is today in the former East Germany. There, Luther would study at the newly founded University of Wittenberg in preparation to be a biblical and theological teacher. Staupitz was correct. Luther’s study opened his mind to a “new” way of thinking about God and His relationship with humanity. Of course, Luther’s discoveries were not new, as others in the history of the Church had learned these things long before. But they were new to the young man Martin Luther.

By the standards of Germany today, Wittenberg is a fairly small community of about thirty thousand people. Back in Luther’s time, Wittenberg was much smaller. Luther reportedly said to Staupitz, “This place will be the death of me,” to which Staupitz replied, “Well, God can use a clever young man like you in heaven if it comes to that.”

Luther eventually earned his doctorate degree in 1512. He was added to the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg at that time on the condition that he would teach in Wittenberg indefinitely. Luther’s main focus of study was the Bible, especially the Old Testament. If Luther were alive today, he would probably teach in the Old Testament department of a modern seminary. But Luther viewed the Old Testament as a witness to Jesus Christ. Indeed, he came to believe that the Bible as a whole, not only the New Testament, was a book about Christ and who Christ is for us.

Luther feared the phrase “the righteousness of God” from Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter three. He knew that in the eyes of God, he was unrighteous. In spite of all his efforts, he was powerless to cleanse himself from all sin. Even his best actions were not pure. And so he felt that he was doomed to face God’s judgement and condemnation.

But at some point along the way, probably in the year 1519, Luther had what is often called a “Tower Experience.” What that meant is that he was in the tower of the monastery when it occurred. It was there that he grasped the meaning of Paul’s words “the righteousness of God.” He realized that righteousness is not only something that God *demands*; God *provides* righteousness to sinful people through the gift of Jesus Christ, which we receive through faith, trust in the promises of God. Luther reports, “I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.”

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

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**The season of Lent, which began with Ash Wednesday on March 1, continues into the month of April. The season of Lent lasts for forty days (with the exception of Sundays), which symbolizes the forty days that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. There will be no confirmation class during Lent, but students can use these Wednesday evenings as opportunities to fulfill their worship note requirements. There will be one more Lenten evening worship service before Holy Week, the week before Easter:**

**Sunday, April 2nd, 10:30 AM: Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**Wednesday, April 5th, 7:00 PM: (Featured Hymn: *He Leadeth Me, O Blessed Thought*)**

**Sunday, April 9th, 10:30 AM: Palm Sunday/The Sunday of the Passion**

**Thursday, April 13th: Maundy Thursday worship, 7:00 PM (the Holy Week service will be on Thursday of Holy Week rather than on Good Friday)**

**Sunday, April 16th, 10:30 AM: The Resurrection of our Lord/Easter Sunday**

**Commemoration of the Saints**

Lutherans do not venerate (pray to) special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present.



For April of 2017, we remember **Olavus Petri and Laurentius Petri**, Lutheran church reformers of Sweden.

Olavus Petri is often called the “Martin Luther of Sweden.” He had studied with Martin Luther in Wittenberg, Germany in the 1520s. In the meantime, the Church of Sweden had broken ties with the authority of the Roman Church for political rather than theological reasons. What that meant is that the Church of Sweden was no longer under the authority of the Pope. Rather, it looked to the king of Sweden as its head. Olavus Petri returned to Sweden, and he guided the Swedish Church using insights he gained from his time with Martin Luther. His brother Laurentius Petri was named the Archbishop of Uppsala, Sweden. Olavus died on April 19, 1552, and eventually the Swedish Church became explicitly Lutheran when it formally recognized the Augsburg Confession in 1593.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

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**Worship Schedule**

**April 2:** Fifth Sunday in Lent (Purple)

**April 5 (Wednesday):** Purple (Second session of first Communion instruction for fifth grade, 5:00 PM

**April 9:** Palm Sunday/The Sunday of the Passion: Purple

**April 13 (Thursday):** Maundy Thursday Holy Week Worship: Purple (altar is stripped at conclusion)

**April 16:** The Resurrection of Our Lord/Easter Sunday: White

**April 23:** Second Sunday of Easter: White

**April 30:** Third Sunday of Easter: White

**Featured Hymn for April 2017**

***Awake, My Heart, with Gladness***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 152*

1. Awake, my heart, with gladness, See what today is done; Now, after gloom and sadness, Comes forth the glorious Sun. My Savior there was laid Where our bed must be made When to the realms of light Our spirit wings its flight.
2. The foe in triumph shouted When Christ lay in the tomb; But, lo, he now is routed, His boast is turned to gloom. For Christ again is free; In glorious victory He Who is strong to save Has triumphed o’er the grave.
3. This is a sight that gladdens; What peace it doth impart! Now nothing ever saddens The joy within my heart. No gloom shall ever shake, No foe shall ever take, The hope which God’s own Son In love for me hath won.
4. Now hell, its prince, the devil Of all their powers are shorn; Now I am safe from evil, And sin I laugh to scorn. Grim Death with all his might Cannot my soul affright; He is a powerless form, Howe’er he rave and storm.
5. Now I will cling forever To Christ, my Savior true; My Lord will leave me never, Whate’er He passeth through. He rends Death’s iron chain, He breaks through sin and pain, He shatters hell’s dark thrall, I follow Him through all.

* Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676, trans. John Kelly, 1833-1890

*Note: Johann Crüger set Gerhardt’s Easter text to a tune that demonstrates the rising of Christ from the grave in the climbing of the last musical phrase.*

**Monthly Watchword for April 2017**

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”

* Luke 24:5-6 ESV

**Ushers for March:**

* Head Ushers:
  + Jamie and Mica Olson
* Ushers:
  + Gary and Bev Kumm
  + Vicki Jensen
  + Jeff Hanson
  + Nancy Magorien

**For Further Information on LCMC and the NALC:** You can download and read the newsletters of both organizations at the following addresses:

* **http://www.lcmc.net/newsletters**
* **http://thenalc.org/newsletter/**

**Website:** The web address is as follows:

* **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**

**Holy Week Worship:** As with last year, Good Shepherd will hold Holy Week worship on Maundy Thursday (April 13) at 7:00 PM rather than on Good Friday.

**First Communion Instruction:** For fifth graders of the congregation, the second meeting for instruction for receiving first Communion will be held on Wednesday night, April 5 at 5:00 PM.

**Sunday, April 30:** On this Sunday, there will be the Rite of Confirmation for eligible students as well as Senior Recognition Sunday, with presentation of quilts.

**Scholarship Applications:** Are due to Margo Poppe by April 16.

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**The Sacrament of Holy Communion**

***When is a person worthy to receive the sacrament?***

*Fasting and other outward disciplines are indeed good preparation, but people are truly worthy and well prepared who believe these words, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” But those who do not believe these words or who doubt them are unworthy and unprepared, for the words “for you” require truly believing hearts.*

**April 2017**

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| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | 1 |
| 2  Sunday School, 9:30 AM  Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion (altar rail)  Purple | 3 | 4 | 5  Pr. Tom in Lindy  First Communion instruction, 5:00 PM  Lenten evening worship, 7:00 PM | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9  Sunday school, 9:30  Worship, 10:30 (Palm Sunday)  Purple | 10 | 11 | 12  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Council meeting, 7:00 PM | 13  Maundy Thursday  Holy Week worship, 7:00 PM | 14  Good Friday  No worship in evening | 15 |
| 16  Sunday School, 9:30 ?  Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion (continuous line)  Easter Sunday  White | 17 | 18 | 19  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Women’s meeting, 10:00 AM | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23  Sunday School, 9:30 AM  Worship, 10:30  White | 24 | 25 | 26 27 28 29  Pr. Tom in Lindy | | | |
| 30  Sunday School, 9:30 AM  Worship, 10:30 AM  Rite of Confirmation and senior recognition  White |  |  |  | | | |

Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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