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

**Lindy, Nebraska**

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**The Rod and Staff**



**May 2017**

**A Series on the Lutheran Reformation: The Indulgence Debate**

We continue in this month of May 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.

In Luther’s day, the whole church of western Europe was subject to the authority of the pope in Rome. Pope Leo X was the son of a wealthy Italian family, the House of Medici. He was known for his extravagant tastes and gratuitous spending. Pope Leo undertook the task of renovating St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, hiring the best craftsmen and artists to make his dream a reality. But all this required money. Leo decided to use the common practice of “indulgences” as a means of raising funds for the project.

As Luther had experienced during his visit to Rome, indulgences were already a popular institution. Originally, indulgences were certificates issued by the church to recognize significant acts of penance, such as undergoing a pilgrimage or performing a work of humility. Such acts were understood to merit special pardon and favor from God.

In the theology of the time, a distinction was made between the guilt of sin (which could be forgiven) and the subsequent penalty that sin incurred, which had to be “worked off” by acts of penance. If a person died without having satisfied this requirement, they would have to spend time in a place called “purgatory” to complete their penance and be purged of their impurity. Indulgences were said to reduce this penalty by drawing on the surplus grace earned by the saints of old.

In the service of his ambitions, Pope Leo began offering special papal indulgences throughout the lands of Europe on the basis of cash donations. Not only were these “plenary” indulgences (meaning they had the power to remit all penalties), but these indulgences could also be purchased on behalf of the dead, effectively freeing them from their entire sentence in purgatory. As a result, a great deal of wealth came into the papal coffers.

In German lands, one of the most notorious sellers of these indulgences was a man named Brother John Tetzel. A friar of the Dominican Order, he was described as being not too bright, but good at his job of raising money. A fire-and-brimstone preacher, Tetzel played on people’s fear of death and hell. People flocked to buy indulgences that promised to free them from the debt incurred by their sins. Tetzel’s promise to those who worried about loved ones trapped in purgatory was just what they wanted to hear. “As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs!”

When Luther heard of what Tetzel was doing in neighboring districts and how the friar was preying on the fears of the poor, he worried about the pastoral implications, especially the bad theology that it conveyed to the masses. Luther thought it necessary to have a public discussion of the practice of indulgences among the local clergy and theologians in Wittenberg.

The legend is that on October 31, 1517 A.D., the Eve of All Saints’ Day (November 1), Luther nailed 95 statements of debate to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, which was the place where public notices were posted in the community. This document, known as the “95 Theses,” was written in Latin and intended for scholarly debate at the university. But the theses were quickly translated into common German. Because of the new technology of the printing press, Luther’s arguments against indulgences—and the pope’s lack of wisdom and authority in issuing them—soon began spreading throughout all of Germany.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

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**Worship Schedule**

**May 7:** Fourth Sunday of Easter (Good Shepherd Sunday), 10:30 AM with Holy Communion from altar rail (White)

**May 14:** Fifth Sunday of Easter, 10:30 AM (White)

**May 21:** Sixth Sunday of Easter, 10:30 AM with Holy Communion from continuous line (White)

**May 28:** Seventh Sunday of Easter, 10:30 AM (White)

**NALC Video and Devotions**

There are two small things to which I would like to draw your attention.

On our website, **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**, you will notice that you can now access daily devotions from the North American Lutheran Church. Under “Daily Devotions and News,” you can read brief reflections on the Bible from various pastors and laypeople in the NALC.

Also, you will find on the website under “NALC Video” an introductory video about the North American Lutheran Church, one of the two church bodies that Good Shepherd is connected with. Though this video is a few years old, it is still a good introduction to what the NALC is about. The video features our Bishop John Bradosky as well as General Secretary Mark Chavez, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism David Wendel, and Assistant to the Bishop for Missions Gemechis Buba.

**Instructions for Altar and Communion Set Up**

Pr. Tom will soon be typing up a new document with instructions for altar and set up for Holy Communion, as the old document that was posted inside the cabinet door was outdated. We will make sure that everyone involved in this important part of congregational life gets a copy as well. Many thanks to everyone for their service as ushers and all that role entails!

**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 May of 2017, we remember **John Calvin**, an influential Reformation theologian and key figure in the development of Protestant theology. He is commemorated on May 27.

Calvin was born in Picardy, France in 1509. He began studying for the priesthood in the Roman Church in Paris, but he then switched to studying law. At some point prior to 1533, he was influenced by the work of Martin Luther and his colleagues, becoming a Protestant himself. After a few years of study, he issued his most important work, entitled *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This work presents Christian theology in a clear and systematic manner; unlike Martin Luther’s writings, which can be called “occasional,” in that he wrote in response to particular occasions, Calvin approached the task of writing theology in a topical manner. Nevertheless, the theological influence of Luther on Calvin cannot be denied. When passing through Geneva, Switzerland in 1536, Calvin was called upon to remain and oversee the work of reforming the church in that city. In this “Geneva Commonwealth,” the Christian Church in the city became closely connected with the civil government. Calvin’s reputation as a systematic theologian grew and became tremendously influential. His method of theology, known as Calvinism, went on to become the primary influence in the Reformed Protestant tradition, which includes groups such as Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, and even the Puritans of the past. For example, the Pilgrims that came to Massachusetts in 1620 were Calvinist Puritans. Though similar to Lutheranism in many ways, Calvinism emphasizes the glory and sovereignty of God, whereas Lutheranism emphasizes first the love of God.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Confirmands from April, 2017**

**Makenna Claire Guenther**, 4/30/17; **Jaiden Nicole Johnson**, 4/30/17

They became members of the Church when they were baptized and have now have completed a time of basic instruction in the Christian faith. When God begins a relationship with us as we are baptized, we are called to grow in deeper understanding of the love of God and profess our faith in word and deed, something that continues all throughout life, well beyond confirmation day. We pray for these two in their continued life of faith in the fellowship of the congregation and whole Christian Church.

**Featured Hymn for May 2017**

***O Jesus, I Have Promised***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 79*

1. Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end; remain forever near me, my master and my friend. I shall not fear the battle if you are by my side, nor wander from the pathway if you will be my guide.
2. Oh, let me feel you near me; the world is ever near. I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear. My foes are ever near me, around me and within; but, Jesus, then draw nearer to shield my soul from sin.
3. Oh, let me hear you speaking in accents clear and still above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will. Now speak to reassure me, to hasten or control. Now speak and make me listen, O Guardian of my soul.
4. O Jesus, you have promised to all who follow you that where you are in glory your servant shall be too. And Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end; oh, give me grace to follow, my master and my friend.
* John E. Bode, 1816-1874

*Note: Bode, an Anglican divine, wrote this for the confirmation of his daughter. It has since become a common hymn for such an occasion.*

**Monthly Watchword for May 2017**

“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

* Colossians 4:6 ESV

**Ushers for May:**

* Head Ushers:
	+ Jeff and Beth Barger
* Ushers:
	+ Jerome and Venita Sage
	+ Marlin and Pat Kumm
	+ Brad and Cindy Sage
	+ Red Branstiter

**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**

**Quotes from Martin Luther:**

*“God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him.”*

*“No greater mischief can happen to a Christian people, than to have God’s word taken from them, or falsified, so that they no longer have it pure and clear.”*

*“Whenever a man reads the Word of God, the Holy Spirit is speaking to him.”*

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

**Household Prayers**

***How the head of the family is to teach members of the household to say morning and evening prayers.***

*A Morning Prayer: In the morning, when you get out of bed, make the sign of the cross and say: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Then say the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. You may also use this prayer: “I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I ask you to protect me this day also from sin and every evil, that in all I do today I may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all that is mine. Let you holy angel watch over me, that the wicked foe have no power over me. Amen.” After singing or reading a hymn, or according to your devotional habits, you are to go to your work with confidence and joy.*

**May 2017**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  | 1 |  2  |  3  | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion (altar rail)White(Good Shepherd Sunday) | 8 | 9 | 10Pr. Tom in Lindy | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14Worship, 10:30Pr. Tom away; Pr. Bill Nelson-Loefke preaching and presidingWhite | 15 | 16 | 17 Pr. Tom in LindyCouncil meeting, 7:00 PM | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion (continuous line)White | 22 | 23 | 24Pr. Tom in LindyWomen’s meeting, 10:00 AM | 25The Ascension of our Lord | 26 | 27 |
| 28Worship, 10:30White | 29 | 30 | 31 Pr. Tom in Lindy |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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