**Reofrmation unday- october 31, 2021**

**zion lutherna church, philipsburg**

**GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**ANNOUNCMENTS**

Welcome to all on this Reformation Sunday, October 31, 2021. Please continue to keep Norma and Reta in your prayers. Norma remains at Seaforth and Reta is still in hospital but expects to be home next week.

Wonderful news was received from Synod….We can resume singing in church as long as masks are worn properly. Please make sure they fit snuggly around your nose. You may have also heard that churches can go back to full capacity worship, but that requires mandatory checking of vaccination status. This will be discussed at the Council meeting on Tuesday night. Council will also be discussing the resumption of comforter knotting on Thursday mornings.

Something new is happening at Zion. Some of you attended the online Sunday morning Coffee Hours when the doors of Zion were shuttered due to the pandemic. This time of fellowship has been missed by members of the congregation. At our last worship Committee meeting we discussed having a brief time of fellowship and community 2 evenings a month. This will happen on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month from 7:30-8:15 p.m. The evening will include a time of sharing, a healthy tip or recipe that one enjoys, and end with meditation and prayer. Each session will be led by different members. Look for the GoTo Meeting link for our first session on November 3rd in the November Messenger. An email will also be sent out early this coming week.

We got word this week that Zion received a mission grant for our Linked In, Building Community project of purchasing an iPad for our online Sunday morning services. We give thanks to the Synod Mission Committee for this opportunity to further our online presence not only for our own members but the community at large. If you were on Facebook Friday afternoon you may have noticed that Zion was “live.” Olivia Dale and I were able to figure out a plan for us to provide a simple live service each week. We are live today, unofficially, to see what bugs we will have to work out. Next week will be our official first Sunday of hybrid worship at Zion.

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose teaching is life, whose presence is sure, and whose love is endless. **Amen.**

God our comforter:

**You are the One who is always on the move, always creating and re-creating. And yet, we confess, O Lord, that our lives can become static, routinely paralyzed by doubt and fear. We remain fixed in patterns of greed, covetousness, and self-interest. We doubt your promises of abundant, everlasting life and so we live in dread of our neighbours, our friends, and our enemies. Our souls remain still. We do not love as you love. Nor do we live as you would have us live, with courage, generosity and boldness of the gospel.**

**In the silence of our hearts, we offer up to you those things we have done and all we have left undone. *short silence***

**Forgive us, O God. Renew us by your Spirit, and reform us with your compassion, remaking us more fully into the image of Christ, and as humble servants of your reign. Amen.**

Friends, the good news of the gospel is that God’s love in Christ stretches so deep and so wide that it infiltrates every broken place in our hearts and in our world. Our hatred is met with love, our cruelty is met with compassion, our sins and our trespasses are met with forgiveness. It is greater than anything you have ever done, or could do. Open your hearts to let the love of God in, because in Christ you are forgiven, freed, made new. Believe in this great good news. **Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* (ELW 504)**

1 A mighty fortress is our God,  
a sword and shield victorious;  
he breaks the cruel oppressor's rod  
and wins salvation glorious.  
The old satanic foe  
has sworn to work us woe!  
With craft and dreadful might  
he arms himself to fight.  
On earth he has no equal.  
  
2 No strength of ours can match his might!  
We would be lost, rejected.  
But now a champion comes to fight,  
whom God himself elected.  
You ask who this may be?  
The Lord of hosts is he!  
Christ Jesus, mighty Lord,  
God's only Son, adored.  
He holds the field victorious.  
  
3 Though hordes of devils fill the land  
all threat'ning to devour us,  
we tremble not, unmoved we stand;  
they cannot overpow'r us.  
Let this world's tyrant rage;  
in battle we'll engage!  
His might is doomed to fail;  
God's judgment must prevail!  
One little word subdues him.  
  
4 God's Word forever shall abide,  
no thanks to foes, who fear it;  
for God himself fights by our side  
with weapons of the Spirit.  
Were they to take our house,  
goods, honor, child, or spouse,  
through life be wrenched away,  
they cannot win the day.  
The kingdom's ours forever!

**GREETING (ELW p. 213)**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW p. 215)**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your word, protect and comfort them in times of trial, defend them against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

*The assembly is seated.*

**WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

A reading from Jeremiah.

31The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. 33But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 46**

1God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
 2Therefore we will not fear, though the  earth be moved,  
  and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;  
 3though its waters rage and foam, and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.  
 4There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of | the Most High.  
 5God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken; God shall help it at the | break of day.  
 6The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake; God speaks, and the earth | melts away.   
 7The Lord of  hosts is with us; the God of Jacob | is our stronghold.  
 8Come now, regard the works of the Lord, what desolations God has brought upon the earth;  
 9behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world;  
  who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.  
 10“Be still, then, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted  in the earth.”  
 11The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob | is our stronghold.

**SECOND READING: Romans 3:19-28**

A reading from Romans.

19Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.  
  21But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.  
  27Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL: John 8:31-36**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

31Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; 32and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” 33They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?”  
  34Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. 35The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. 36So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON (ELW p. 217)**

Today we are celebrating the 504th Anniversary of the Reformation. Time really does fly; it seems like just yesterday we were celebrating the 500th Anniversary.

I spent some time this week reflecting on the life of Martin Luther. I wondered what he would think of all that has happened since he posted the 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg so many years ago. I thought that this morning I would speak to who Luther was, and give some insight into his life which might just help us give insight into our own lives today.

Luther was born on November 11, 1483, to Hans and Margarethe Luther. He was baptized the next day. Hans was a common working-class man who worked in the copper mines. He wanted his son to have more opportunities to succeed in life than he did, so he worked hard to make sure that Martin received an education. He was the first of the Luther family to receive academic education. When he was 14, he was sent to the semimonastic school of the Brothers of the Common where his eyes were opened to the world around him. After graduating from the Brothers of the Common, he went on to University, where he enjoyed debating and was given the nickname of “the philosopher.” In 1505 he graduated with a master’s degree and was interested in furthering his career by entering law school. There is not much mention of Luther's faith during his formative years, but all of this was to change soon.

On July 12, 1505, Luther was returning home from a short vacation when a bolt of lightning struck the ground beside him. The strike was so powerful that it threw him several feet from where he was walking, and in a moment of panic (or maybe it was clarity) he called out to St. Anna(the mother of Mary), exclaiming, “Help St. Anna, I want to become a monk.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Two weeks later, his affairs were in order, and he found himself standing at the gates of the Black Monastery of the Augustinian Friars.

It turns out that Martin had been struggling deeply with his faith and the dogma and practises of the Catholic church. He was greatly disturbed by “the tenatio tristitae or the dread concerning his sins.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

As time went on, his struggles and inner conflict continued. He experienced many dark nights of the soul where his faith was in doubt. Luther lived virtuously but still felt himself a sinner before a righteous God of wrath. He was displeased with God and felt that he was being punished by God for his sin. The church offered little relief for him as he was repulsed by their ethics in the need to provide indulgences to gain one’s way out of purgatory and into heaven. Parishioners of wealth had no problems paying the indulgences. But those of little wealth struggled, and it tormented Luther to know that the church was doing this. This was not the gospel. This was not Christ at work in the world. This was not the power of the Holy Spirit working in, through, and around the people of God. This was power and greed.

Luther spent much of his time studying scripture in his small room, trying to find a reprieve for his soul, trying to mend his broken spirit. Finally, the words of Paul in Romans 1:17 began to speak to him, “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith” In reading those words, Luther was reborn.  The compassion of God and the power of the Holy Spirit entered his heart. The righteousness of God which had before tormented him now brought him a renewed sense of peace and love. He was free from the chains of guilt and sin that surrounded him.

This newfound faith was what pushed Luther to write his 95 theses. He wrote the theses not to start a new church but to bring to light the corruption of the church in hopes of reforming and renewing it, in hopes of enlivening the faith of churchgoers and the leadership, in hopes of rebuilding a relationship with God through the witness of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. In the words of scripture, he had found freedom; he found the refuge and the strength that only a loving God could provide. He found peace in the knowledge of Romans 3:22-24, which states “For there is no distinction since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

The gift of grace was more important than the collection of any indulgences. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Luther finally understood that there was no amount of good works that could be done or indulgences to be collected that would get you into heaven. Our debts were and are paid for by the cross. We know the promise and hope of eternal life. No longer are we enslaved to sin, (yes here is that perfectly imperfect reminder once again) which calls us to be true disciples of Jesus, to be a neighbour to all around us, to love one another as we continue to be loved. This is the gift that was given to us in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. This is the freedom that Jesus spoke of in John this morning. This is the truth that sets us free.

Luther took many risks in penning the 95 theses and placing them on the doors of the Castle Church for all to see. In taking that risk he trusted his faith. He trusted in the goodness and the grace of God. He trusted in the freedom that only God can provide. Can we as the church do the same? What are we willing to risk to truly live into that same freedom knowing that we are beloved children of God?  Are you up for the task? Let it be so.

**HYMN OF THE DAY*Oh, Praise the Gracious Power* (ELW 651)**

1 Oh, praise the gracious pow'r  
that tumbles walls of fear  
and gathers in one house of faith  
all strangers far and near:  
Refrain  
We praise you, Christ!  
Your cross has made us one!  
  
2 Oh, praise persistent truth  
that opens fisted minds  
and eases from their anxious clutch  
the prejudice that blinds: Refrain  
  
3 Oh, praise inclusive love,  
encircling ev'ry race,  
oblivious to gender, wealth,  
to social rank or place: Refrain  
  
4 Oh, praise the word of faith  
that claims us as God's own,  
a living temple built on Christ,  
our rock and cornerstone: Refrain

5 Oh, praise the tide of grace  
that laps at ev'ry shore  
with visions of a world at peace,  
no longer bled by war: Refrain  
  
6 Oh, praise the pow'r, the truth,  
the love, the word, the tide.  
Yet more than these, oh, praise their source,  
praise Christ the crucified: Refrain  
  
7 Oh, praise the living Christ  
with faith's bright songful voice!  
Announce the gospel to the world  
and with these words rejoice: Refrain

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Set free from sin and death and nourished by the word of truth, we join in prayer for all of God’s creation. *A brief silence.*

We pray for all who long for a word of truth and for the radical grace that flows from the cross. Inspire congregations to proclaim your love freely and boldly for all people with persistence and hope. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for your creation, for mountains, rivers, streams, cities, homesteads, and neighborhoods. Write in our hearts a new love and care for creation. Give us the will to curb wasteful habits and to hold accountable those who neglect the vulnerable. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all who aspire to public office. Pour wisdom and understanding upon all who govern so that communities of justice and peace may thrive. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all who long for healing in mind, body, or spirit *especially* Eddy, Elaine, Sarah, Bonnie, Tilly, Katie, Nicole, Esther, Phyllis, John and Ruth, Norma, Reta, Bruce and Ruth, the lives and memory of the over 7000 thousand buried children at residential school sites across Canada, and those we name out loud or in the silence of our hearts. Strengthen hospitals, clinics, counseling centers, long term care homes, and recovery centers to be holy spaces of renewal that all might live the abundant life you intend. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We pray for all who seek to grow in faith and love of you. Guide teaching and learning in confirmation, small groups, Sunday school, youth groups, schools, seminaries, and universities. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We give thanks for all the saints and reformers who have gone before us who dwell in your holy habitation. Give us courage through their example to challenge unjust systems and work toward life-giving reformation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Confident that you hear us, O God, we boldly place our prayers into your hands; through Jesus Christ, our truth and life. **Amen.**

**PEACE (ELW p. 217)**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*The assembly is seated.*

**OFFERING PRAYER**

Giver of Life, prosper the work of our hands in faith. Prosper the work of our gifts offered in gratitude. Prosper the joy of our life in following Jesus Christ, the Word, the truth and the life. Amen

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Holy God, our Sovereign, our Wisdom, our Judge, as nature in the north cycles towards dormancy and death, we thank you for the sustenance of your Word.

For your Word of life, we give thanks.

 We praise you for speaking through Christ your Word, in whom is your authority, your truth, and the justice of your ways. When we are threatened by dangers and surrounded by evil, you speak to us of life that comes through Christ’s death.

For your Word of promise, we praise you.

 Grant us the endurance of the Spirit of your Son. Upheld by the voice of your Word,

may we persevere with courage, energy, and joy, serving our neighbors faithfully until the end of our days.

For your Word of power, we plead.

 Abide with us in your Word, O God, that we may speak your blessing to others,

today and forever. **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER (ELW p. 221)**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,**

**hallowed be thy name,**

**thy kingdom come,** **thy will be done,**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;**

**and forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those**

**who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**and the power, and the glory,**

**forever and ever. Amen.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING**

People of God, you are Christ’s body, bringing new life to a suffering world.

The holy Trinity, ☩ one God, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

**SENDING SONG*Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word* (ELW 517)**

1 Lord, keep us steadfast in your word;  
curb those who by deceit or sword  
would wrest the kingdom from your Son  
and bring to naught all he has done.  
  
2 Lord Jesus Christ, your pow'r make known,  
for you are Lord of lords alone;  
defend your holy church, that we  
may sing your praise eternally.  
  
3 O Comforter of priceless worth,  
send peace and unity on earth;  
support us in our final strife  
and lead us out of death to life.

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. The living Word dwells in you.

Thanks be to God.

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1. Hanns Lilje, Carl J. Schindler, *Luther Now* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1952), 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luther Now*, 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)