

COS Reformation Service

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

P.O. Box 98, Okabena, MN 56161

A member congregation of the
Church of the Lutheran Confession

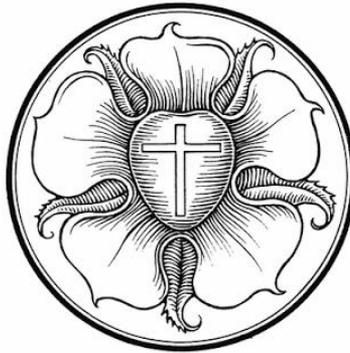
James Albrecht, Pastor – 507-853-4417

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WELCOME To all of you who are visiting our service this morning, we extend a most cordial welcome in Jesus' name. Today's service differs from the norm because our Christian Day School students will be presenting a Reformation Service entitled, "*And Shall be Ours Forever.*" Our hope and prayer is that their message of sin and grace, Law and Gospel, life and death, will bless you in your Christian life.

St. John's started its Day School in 1995, in recognition of the church's centennial. Our students are blessed to not only receive an excellent education, but to daily learn how to apply the message of God's Word to their lives. Not only do they learn English, Math, Art, Music, and the Sciences, they learn these subjects from a Christian perspective. Instead of viewing the world as the product of accidental, by-chance evolution over

the course of billions of years, they are taught the truth: God created this world in six normal days. His perfect world was ruined by man's sin. God resolved the problem of sin by coming to our earth to live and die as our Substitute.

In an age where it is hard for small, rural congregations to remain viable, we feel especially blessed to have a school. Our conviction is that, even if only one soul is kept in the faith as the result of the Gospel heard in our school, it is worth every penny that was spent and every ounce of energy that was poured into it.

Be sure to join us for dinner and worship with us again, soon.

Organist Mrs. Jennifer Dukleth

Accompanist Amber Ruthenbeck

OFFERING The offering plate will not be passed this morning because we do not want our visitors to feel obligated to put something into it. Rather, the plates will be available on the entryway table.

ARTWORK The themed canvas paintings (in front) that highlight the parts of today's service are the work of the Upper Grade students. The magnets on the tables in the kitchen are the work of the K-5 students.

VOTERS At last Sunday's meeting, the following were items were decided: Membership transfers: Joseph Albrecht to Zion, Hidewood, SD; Carl Strike to Messiah, Eau Claire. Service schedule: Thanksgiving Day 9:30; 3 midweek Advent services beginning on December 5; Christmas Eve 6:30 p.m. Christmas Day 9:30 a.m. The Election meeting will be held after the service on Sunday, December 2. The Nominating Committee will meet at least two weeks prior in order to propose a list of candidates. Those who are elected or re-elected will be installed on Sunday, January 6. The Annual Meeting will be held on January 20. (Also noted: the church shingling project will soon be underway; prospective buyers have inquired about the teacherages that are for sale but no legitimate offers have been made; the process of calling a teacher will resume after Christmas.)

HOSPITALIZED Bill Eigenberg is likely to be released from the VA Hospital on Wednesday. He will become a resident at Trail Ridge Senior Living, 3408 W Ralph Rogers Road, Sioux Falls, SD 57108.

CLC NEWS Pastor Michael Wilke, Saginaw, MI has returned the call to Red Wing, MN. Pastor John Hein, Fridley, has the call to Spokane.

REFORMATION Any study of Reformation history is also a study of the grace and providence of God. With the benefit of hindsight we are able to connect the dots that reveal an amazing pattern of God's brilliance and goodness. The Lord clearly prepared the world for the Reformation, just as He clearly prepared the reformer for the world. Drill down into any part of Luther's life and you will find the fingerprints of God's direction and intervention.

Here are several: Luther's restless days of monastic life equipped him with a remarkable grasp of Canon Law in much the same way that Gamaliel's training made the Apostle Paul an expert in Jewish Law. Seven hours of daily worship in the monastery, the chanting of Psalms, the study of Scripture, plus countless hours of prayer, forged in Luther a thorough knowledge of the Bible, a familiarity with the Church fathers, and a self-discipline that would enable him to accomplish so much in such little time. The struggles of soul were etched into his psyche so that he could speak with rare understanding and conviction. Few have strained so arduously in finding peace with God; few could appreciate the message of grace more than he.

It is also clear that God surrounded Luther with the right people at the right time, including some who would not join the Reformation movement. God used Prior John Staupitz to bring Luther to Wittenberg and eventually to his position as Doctor of Theology. The Lord provided a friend in Spalatin, Elector Frederick, Philip Melancthon, Nicholas Amsdorf, and many, many others. A handful of scholars left their mark on him, including Johann Lang, a fellow professor who enabled Luther to become proficient in Greek, as well as Erasmus, whose Greek text Luther relied on for his translation. Lives intersected at the right place at just the right time for the Lord's purposes to be fulfilled.

God prepared Luther for the watershed moments that would change the trajectory of his life. One was the fact that he became a professor at the new University of Wittenberg. The school, funded by Elector Frederick, was a typical university of the times. It offered an undergraduate degree in the Liberal Arts, and advanced degrees in Theology, Law, and Medicine. In 1508 Luther was called to teach Moral Philosophy. At the time, the church relied heavily on the works of men like Aristotle and Plato to answer

spiritual questions, such as: “*Why am I here?*” – “*Why are some saved and others lost?*” – “*What happens when I die?*” Schooled in an Augustinian monastery, Luther was naturally taught to trust Augustine. Since Augustine mixed Law with Gospel and confused justification for sanctification, it is no wonder that Luther struggled to be right with God.

Luther left the University in 1509 but would return in 1512. This time he was called to lecture on Genesis. Unlike modern Professors who teach the same class year after year, and follow a strict schedule in order to cover a determined amount of material, Luther simply taught from Scripture. He was on no set schedule. His classes were open to any students who wished to come. Once the Reformation was underway, there were as many as 400 students attending a single lecture. The more he was immersed in the Scriptures, the more he began to question the wisdom of relying on the works of sinful men. At some point between 1512 and 1514, Luther had his “Tower Experience” – where the Gospel finally became clear to him. In studying Romans he finally realized that “the righteousness of God” in the New Testament is not the righteousness the Lord demands from us, but is the righteousness that God gives us by faith.

On the eve of All Saints Day in 1517, he posted 95 theses against the sale of indulgences. This ultimately led to a defining moment at Worms in 1521. As he stood before the imperial council and the electors of Germany, Luther was ordered to recant the things he had written. To refuse would result in excommunication from the only church he had known and would make him an outlaw in the kingdom. Here, especially, the Lord prepared him. Luther found no other option than to stand with Scripture alone.

As Lutherans, we don’t follow Martin Luther. Lutheranism does exactly the opposite. It stands or falls on God’s Word alone. You can’t always trust people or churches but you can always rely on God’s Word. This is the heritage we have received. This is what needs to be guarded lest we squander it away and revert to trusting the words of men.

USHERS Joshua T., Bruce E., Steve R., Joe L., Nathan A.
Phil S., Zachary S., Nathan V., Anthony F., Ryan D.

CLEANING (Wk 1) B. Eigenberg, J. Eigenberg, L. Ferguson
C. Ahrens, A. Fogelman, M. Fogelman