



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2021

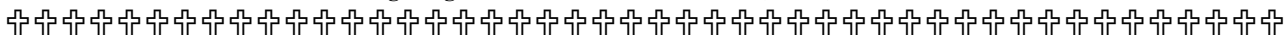


St. John's Lutheran Church
Burt, Iowa 50522
Phone: 515-924-3344
www.stjohnsburt.org

He remembers His **Testament** forever;
the **Word** he appointed for a thousand generations
Psalm 105:8(JP)

Rev. Thomas Cowell
Pastor
Phone: 515-924-3388

'Telling the good News about Jesus-In Burt, Iowa, and the World'



A Word from our Lutheran Fathers

With the time frame of this edition of the Parish Messenger including our celebration of the Lutheran Reformation in October, I thought it would be fitting to share a word on that subject. When we think of the Reformation we think of Luther nailing the ninety-five theses to the church door. We think of Luther standing before the pope declaring: "Here I stand." We think of the Reformers presenting the Augsburg Confession before the emperor. Or, we may think of iconic Reformation documents such as the Small Catechism or the hymn, A Mighty Fortress.

This, though, is where our knowledge and interest in the Lutheran Reformation and in our distinct Lutheran identity might end. What we often forget about is that the events and theology that define the Lutheran Reformation are neither contained to a couple decades in the sixteenth century nor to just a few theological documents. For five hundred years Lutherans have been teaching and confessing the truth of God's Word through countless historically significant events and in countless pages of sermons, commentaries, and theological articles and books.

One of my goals as your pastor is to hand down the many and great treasures of the faith of our Lutheran and "pre-Lutheran" fathers and mothers of every century in a useful and digestible way. One way this happens is through the "From the Church Fathers" and the "From the Book of Concord" sections on the back of our announcements page. Another way the wisdom of our Christian ancestors gets handed down is through resources used in Sunday Bible study. Another way yet is that rather than trying to draw from my own limited knowledge in order to write articles such as this, I can instead reproduce and condense the knowledge of great Lutheran theologians for you to enjoy!

One such source of wisdom from which I pulled the following content is a lengthy document written by Martin Luther in 1539 titled, *On the Councils and the Church*. As you know, the reason there are congregations today called "Lutheran" is because the Pope excommunicated from the Roman Catholic church Luther and those who shared his beliefs in justification by faith alone through Christ alone. Although Luther would have rather remained and been allowed to preach the truth within the Roman Catholic church, he was forced to begin preaching, teaching, and ordaining pastors for service in a church body now called "Lutheran."

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This raised the question, with the Lutherans and several other different “churches” popping up outside of the Roman Catholic church, how do we know what is the true Church on earth? Is the true Church on earth defined by a pope? A Christian council? Certain traditions or ceremonies? This is one of the main questions Luther answers in *On the Councils and the Church*. Within a section of this document Luther gives a list which has come to be known as the “seven marks of the Church on earth,” or, according to Luther’s own words the “seven principle parts of Christian sanctification or the seven holy possessions of the Church (*On the Councils and the Church*, AE 41:166)” .

Here, in a greatly abbreviated form, are Luther’s seven marks of the Church. These quotations are taken from pages 148-166 of volume 41 of Luther’s Works (American Edition):

“First, the holy Christian people are recognized by their possession of the holy Word of God.” [...]

“We are speaking of the external word, preached orally by men like you and me, for this is what Christ left behind as an external sign, by which his church, or his Christian people in the world, should be recognized. We also speak of this external word as it is sincerely believed and openly professed before the world, as Christ says, ‘Every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father and his angels’ [Matt. 10:32].”

“Second, God’s people or the Christian holy people are recognized by the holy sacrament of baptism, wherever it is taught, believed, and administered correctly according to Christ’s ordinance.

That too is a public sign and a precious, holy possession by which God’s people are sanctified. It is the holy bath of regeneration through the Holy Spirit [Titus 3:5], in which we bathe and with which we are washed of sin and death by the Holy Spirit, as in the innocent holy blood of the Lamb of God. Wherever you see this sign you may know that they church, or the holy Christian people, must surely be present, even if the pope does not baptize you [...].”

“Third, God’s people, or Christian holy people, are recognized by the holy sacrament of the altar, wherever it is rightly administered, believed, and received, according to Christ’s institution.

This too is a public sign and a precious, holy possession left behind by Christ by which his people are sanctified so that they also exercise themselves in faith and openly confess that they are Christian, just as they do with the word and with baptism. And here too you need not be disturbed if the pope does not say mass for you, does not consecrate, anoint, or vest you with a chasuble.”

“Fourth, God’s people or holy Christians are recognized by the office of the keys exercised publicly.

That is, as Christ decrees in Matthew 18[15-20], if a Christian sins, he should be reproved; and if he does not mend his ways, he should be bound in his sin and cast out. If he does mend his ways, he should absolved. That is the office of the keys. [...] The keys belong not to the pope (as he lies) but to the church, that is, to God’s people, or to the holy Christian people throughout the entire world, or wherever there are Christians. [...] The

keys are the pope's as little as baptism, the sacrament, and the word of God are, for they belong to the people of Christ and are called 'the church's keys' not 'the pope's keys.'"

"Fifth, the church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, or has offices that it is to administer.

There must be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ."

"Sixth, the holy Christian people are externally recognized by prayer, public praise, and thanksgiving to God.

Where you see and hear the Lord's Prayer prayed and taught; or psalms or other spiritual songs sung, in accordance with the word of God and the true faith; also the creed, the Ten Commandments, and the catechism used in public, you may rest assured that a holy Christian people of God are present."

"Seventh, the holy Christian people are externally recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross.

They must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord's Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ. [...] When you are condemned, cursed, reviled, slandered, and plagued because of Christ, you are sanctified. It mortifies the old Adam and teaches him patience, humility, gentleness, praise and thanks, and good cheer in suffering."

In summary, the marks, or evidence, of the Christian Church on earth according to Luther are:

1. The Word of God
2. Baptism
3. The Sacrament of the Altar
4. The Office of the Keys
5. Called Ministers
6. Prayer, Public Praise, and Thanksgiving to God
7. The Sacred Cross (Persecution)

Wherever these are found, there is God's Church, regardless of the presence or absence of popes, monks, or any other human invention. These are the seven marks that define us as Christians at St. John's Lutheran Church, and they are the seven marks we celebrate as gifts of God to us this Reformation season.

God be with you as you continue to give thanks to God for your Lutheran Christian faith, and as you continue to grow in that faith with the help of our past preachers and teachers this Reformation season.

Joy in Christ,
Pastor Thomas Cowell
Festival of the Reformation, Anno Domini 2021

Wednesday Christian Catechesis for All Ages

As a reminder, Christians of all ages are welcome to join us in the church basement on Wednesdays beginning at 6:00 p.m. for an hour of Christian catechesis. While this education hour is dedicated primarily to teaching our children the basics of the Christian faith, your faith will no doubt benefit from attending. Likewise, your presence, questions, and comments might be of benefit to the children who learn right alongside you.

Below is the Wednesday Christian Catechesis lesson schedule. If you see a lesson that is particularly intriguing to you, be sure to mark it on your calendar and plan to attend. If you feel passionate or knowledgeable about a certain topic, we are always looking for guest speakers to share a few minutes of knowledge or experience with us in class! Talk with Pastor Cowell if you would like to participate in that way.

September 15	A Review of Who We Are and Why We Are Here
September 22	Creation: God the Creator
September 29	Creation: God the Provider
October 6	Creation: Mankind the caretakers
October 13	Talking the Talk: Defining Law, Gospel, Justification, and Sanctification
October 20	Talking the Talk: Defining Grace, Mercy, Faith, Hope, and Love
October 27	Talking the Talk: Defining Christian, Church, Lutheran, Inspiration, and Inerrancy
November 3	A Simple Explanation of Heaven and Hell
November 10	A Simple Explanation of Heaven and Hell
November 17	A Simple Explanation of Heaven and Hell
November 24	Commemorations and Feast Days of the Church Year
December 1	Life as a Christian Martyr (Advent Midweek Service, 6:30 class)
December 8	Life as a Christian Martyr (Advent Midweek Service, 6:30 class)
December 15	Life as a Christian Martyr (Advent Midweek Service, 6:30 class)
December 22	No Class, Happy Advent!
December 29	No Class, Merry Christmas!

2022

- January 5** Bible verses every Christian should memorize/prayers every Christian should pray
- January 12** History every Christian should know
- January 19** Apps and websites every Christian should use
- January 26** Books every Christian should read
- February 2** Artwork every Christian should see
- February 9** Churches every Christian should visit
- February 16** Music every Christian should hear
- February 23** Movies every Christian should watch
- March 2** Ash Wednesday Divine Service (No Class)
- March 9** Virtues and Vices (Lent Midweek Service, Class at 6:30)
- March 16** Virtues and Vices (Lent Midweek Service, Class at 6:30)
- March 23** Virtues and Vices (Lent Midweek Service, Class at 6:30)
- March 30** Virtues and Vices (Lent Midweek Service, Class at 6:30)
- April 6** Virtues and Vices (Lent Midweek Service, Class at 6:30)
- April 13** NO CLASS, Holy Week
- April 20** Reading, Praying, and Singing the Psalms
- April 27** Reading, Praying, and Singing the Psalms
- May 4** Reading, Praying, and Singing the Psalms
- May 11** Reading, Praying, and Singing the Psalms
- May 18** Last Wednesday picnic/games



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 3 – Rev. Thomas Cowell
- 3 – Elyssa Marlow
- 4 – Dorothy Jahnke
- 4 – David Kerkove
- 4 – Sheryl Weakland
- 5 – Christian Haase
- 9 – Renee Feuring-Blomstrom
- 9 – Floyd Lavrenz
- 9 – Ron Parsons
- 10 – Lola Bierstedt
- 11 – Ann Heyes
- 11 – Lyle Karels
- 13 – Roger Lavrenz
- 15 – Graham Heyer
- 17 – Jeff Madsen
- 18 – Spencer Faber
- 28 – Gerald Thompson
- 29 – Cheryl Batt
- 30 – Duane Heyes

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 – Alexander Fitzgerald
- 5 – Michael Marlow
- 7 – Mike Melick
- 9 – Angela McFarland
- 10 – Lee Huber
- 12 – Kaitlyn Bierstedt
- 18 – Bob Simmons
- 21 – Alexandria Bierstedt
- 23 – Karen Karels
- 23 – Staci Thompson
- 28 – Marilyn Evans
- 30 – Don Madsen



SpecialSenior

Sheryl Weakland – September 4