

The VOICE

October 2022

Missouri District Newsletter



In This Issue: *Reformation*

From the President's Desk

Luther's Most Important Contribution



The celebration of October 31 as Reformation Day or even honoring 1517 as the birth of the Reformation seem somewhat arbitrary. Please don't get me wrong. I want to belt out "A Mighty Fortress" with the rest of you on Reformation Day. However, I would not consider the 95 Theses as Martin Luther's most important contribution. But that is where it all began.

Then, what was Luther's most important contribution? Some might contend that it could be one of his writings such as "The Bondage of the Will," "On Councils and the Church" or "On the Freedom of a Christian." Some would argue that it would be his lectures on Genesis or Galatians. Still others would suggest that it would be his Church Postil, a collection of sermons written later in his life. Those suggestions are all worthy of debate.

I would make the case for his most important contribution being his translation of the Scriptures into the language of the people.

Luther's theological framework was based on "Scripture alone. The importance of making God's Word accessible to all people cannot be overstated. Still today, we give thanks to the work of Lutheran Bible Translators and all who strive to provide God's Word in the language of every people. As we mark the 500th anniversary of Luther's translation of the New Testament, it is good for us to be reminded that there is still work to be done in translating God's Word into more languages.

We give thanks to God for the life and service of Martin Luther, a sinner redeemed by Jesus Christ, and through whom God reformed the Church. May God continue to help us learn from Luther as we are influenced by his theological approach and his writings. From his catechisms and devotional writings to his hymns and sermons, we continue to be blessed by his contributions 500 years later. May God keep us steadfast in God's Word as Lutherans in the gray and latter days.

Fraternally in Christ,

President Lee Hagan



The Impact of the Reformation

Rev. William Marler, *Missouri District First Vice President*

On October 31, 2022, Lutheran Christians will commemorate the 505th anniversary of the Reformation. That date is based on one of several events that might have been chosen to mark the beginning of one of the most impactful movements to ever effect history in Western world civilization. In 1517 the professor/priest Martin Luther is believed to have posted an academic theological document that came to be known as "The 95 Theses," on the door of the Castle Church in the town of Wittenberg, Germany. The 95 Theses were also published, and this was how Luther's teachings, ideas, and challenges gained widespread attention.

Convinced that the Church's official doctrine and practice not only contradicted some of the teachings clearly presented in the Holy Scriptures, but led to unfaithful and harmful practices, Luther sought to bring to attention substantive issues for the Church to debate and discuss. That's how the Church historically handled widespread controversy and challenge. In the early years of the Reformation movement Luther was hopeful that the Church would call an Ecumenical Council (a meeting of all Roman Catholic bishops to come together in study and prayer to solve divisions) to address the doctrinal disintegration and corruption in leadership, and then reform itself. At least four major attempts to silence Luther convinced him otherwise, and by 1521, he expected to be convicted of heresy and executed.

But the Church—while called by the Holy Spirit to be the people of God in the world while not being of the world in beliefs, morals, and lifestyles—never finds itself in an isolated cultural bubble or an historical vacuum. In the complex tapestry of politics, economics, social life, education, religion, etc., Christians are both impacted by and called upon to be an influence on the contemporary culture. The 16th century was a time of major change in the western world. Nationalism was replacing the worn-out idea of a Holy Roman Empire. A middle class was evolving to demand its share of the wealth. Luther's ideas and writings had implications for all these areas of life; he became one of the most popular men in Europe. He was used, misused, and abused. In a peasants' revolt both they and the nobles who crushed them claimed Luther as their hero. Luther was excommunicated by the Pope. His books were burned. But he would be the first major heretic to challenge either Church or State not to be executed. The invasion of the Muslim Turks would buy Luther a decade to spread the Reformation through his writing. An army of pastors, teachers, and education superintendents from Wittenberg University spread the Reformation throughout Europe. Never did Luther conceive of or endorse the creation of "new" churches, what we call denominations. Christ's Church, he believed, was intended to be built only upon the Word of God, the one absolute Truth, and upon Jesus Christ and His Gospel. *By grace alone, by faith alone, Scripture alone* became the motto for Lutheran Christians.


(Continued on next page.)

The Impact of the Reformation

(Continued from previous page.)

The Reformation produced theological and ecclesiastic reform in western Christianity, but the formation of several breakaway churches further divided Christianity. In addition to the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, the Lutheran, Reformed, Radical Reformation groups, and the Church of England all broke ranks and became their own entities. In short time, there were further divisions and “new” groups that emerged among the Reformed and Radical Christians. When British colonists emigrated to North America, Anglicans and a host of Puritan Christian groups came, along with a smaller minority of Catholics. Over 150 years later, when the United States was created, the first amendment to the Constitution separated the institutions of Church and State, and without directly citing Luther, reflected in some part his “two-kingdom” New Testament teaching. James Madison was once asked who the father of the Bill of Rights was; he dodged the immediate question and pointed to Luther. Indeed, Martin Luther and the Reformation inspired not only theological and church reform, but political, social, and educational reform as well.

The distinctive characteristic of Lutheran theology, a rich insight in teaching and practice given to Luther, that may be of most critical importance to us today as we live in this world to share the Gospel while avoiding becoming of the world, is the affirmation of paradox and the polarities: Law and Gospel; Christ as both God and man; the Christian as simultaneously saint and sinner; justification by grace through faith and baptismal regeneration; the real presence of Christ in the Holy Supper, Body (bread) and Blood (wine). The Truth shall set us free.

A photograph of two men standing in front of the Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Germany. The man on the left is wearing a dark polo shirt, and the man on the right is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and glasses. The castle behind them is a large, historic stone building with a prominent tower and a half-timbered upper section. The scene is set outdoors with some greenery in the foreground.

President R. Lee Hagan (left) and First Vice President William Marler (right) in front of Wartburg castle where Dr. Martin Luther translated the New Testament into German.

500th Anniversary with Lutheran Bible Translators

As brought up in this edition of The VOICE, one of Luther's greatest contributions to the Reformation was translating the Bible into the language of the person sitting in the pew. Throughout the centuries more church fathers contributed to translating the Bible accurately and faithfully to the language of their people. We are blessed in the Missouri District to have within our borders an organization that continues this work today: Lutheran Bible Translators

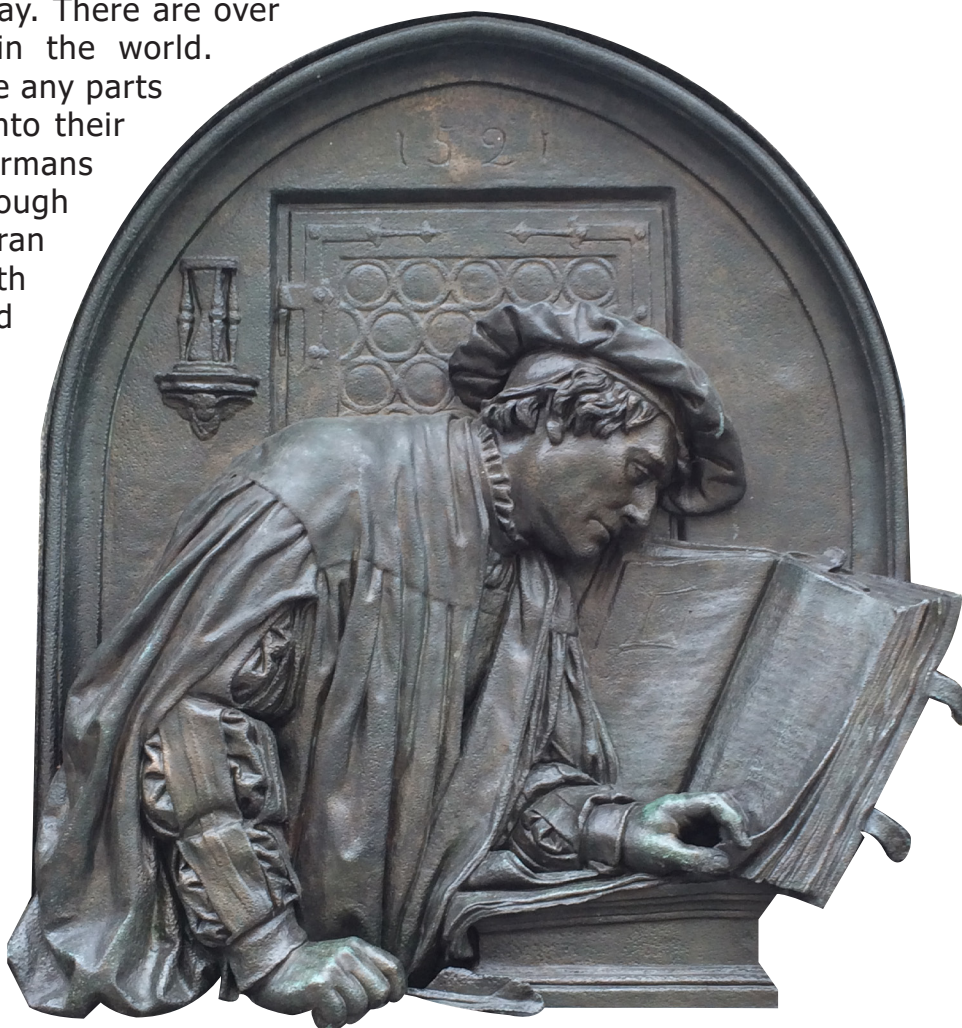
Lutheran Bible Translators was formed in 1964 and is an RSO of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod with its US offices in Concordia MO. Lutheran Bible Translators currently partners with 105 language communities in 17 countries. Translated New Testaments and full Bibles have impacted an estimated 12.9 million people in some of the most remote place in the world. New partnerships and capacity are emerging as resources are available to meet them.

Dr. Mike Rodewald, CEO and Executive Director at Lutheran Bible Translators explains,

Five hundred years ago, the German people were in darkness. Luther's translation of the New Testament into common German changed their world. It galvanized the Reformation. That continues today wherever God's Word is proclaimed through one's own language. The Word comes without barrier and people understand and are called into the story of their salvation through Jesus.

The Reformation continues today. There are over 7000 language communities in the world. More than 1500 do not yet have any parts of God's Word yet translated into their languages. They are like the Germans of 1522 – knowing God through other languages at best. Lutheran Bible Translators partners with local Lutheran churches and languages communities to reach them with the Word through their own languages.

What a wonderful way to continue to share God's salvation and hope, through His own Words. To learn more about Lutheran Bible Translators or to contribute to their work, visit them online at <https://lbt.org/>.



Consecrated STEWARDS

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund offers a program that could greatly impact congregations and their study of stewardship: Consecrated Stewards.

Congregations that fail to talk about Christian stewardship on a regular basis often find themselves talking about money all year long. And some congregations talk about stewardship, but only in the context of the annual budget. However, those budget-focused programs rarely raise more than what is needed to meet the budget.

Instead, Consecrated Stewards is an education emphasis that is founded on Lutheran understanding of biblical stewardship, making sure to keep ministry before money. It uses focuses on Bible-based, grace-inspired management of God's gifts, not on church-budget shortfalls.

Congregations are matched with a LCEF facilitator who have been trained to provide a customized design, team training, and ongoing support. Facilitators makes two or three on-site visits to provide training and assist with the congregational commitment process, and provide ongoing support as needed.

Trinity Lutheran Church in Freistatt has been going through the Consecrated Stewards program. "The congregation hadn't gone through a stewardship program in over 20 years, so there was a feeling that this was a good time to do so," comments Bruce Sletten who served as chair of Trinity's Consecrated Stewards. "Our hope post-COVID was to remind people that it was time to come back to church." Sletten, a Licensed Lay Minister, notes that Trinity used the platform that LCEF had in place, which offers a framework for churches to adapt to their church's needs, "We really took advantage of the flexibility of the Consecrated Stewards platform and tailored it to how we wanted to approach it." Which for Trinity was biblical before financial. "We started with the commitment to be in God's Word," says Sletten. They spent weeks studying growing in God's Word, spending time with God in prayer, looking at being engaged in ministries at the church, and finally asking for a financial commitment.

The response was amazing. Trinity who had been averaging around 125 participants for a weekend of worship welcomed 228 in their doors on October 30 for their commitment Sunday! And their adult Bible Study has doubled in size.

Sletten gives all praise to the Lord, "It's God's hand at work. I told my son 'It's as if God is saying-watch this'."

Casey Carlson serves as the Consecrated Stewards facilitator for Missouri. Connect with him to get your church started!

Casey Carlson
casey.carlson@lcef.org 314-590-6207

YouthLead Missouri

We have been blessed that for decades congregations throughout Missouri encourage youth leadership in churches. Leaders in our Missouri District LYF (Lutheran Youth Fellowship) have been sharing the Gospel of Jesus at our District Youth Gatherings and have been encouraged and led by amazing mentors – both volunteers and professional church workers. And hundreds of Missouri District Youth have been trained through Peer ministry training at the District, serving in different leadership roles in Missouri and beyond.

We can look at our strong tradition of youth leadership training as we look to the future to how God leads us going forward. Our goal is to recognize, encourage, and train our youth in leadership as we cast a wider net to raise up more leaders in the church.

Introducing: YouthLead Missouri.

The new vision of YouthLead Missouri will combine some of the best aspects of what we have done traditionally in Missouri with the goal of expanding the net we cast in the Missouri District. Any high school aged youth in Missouri can be a part YouthLead Missouri starting with a leadership training event in February 2023. Entire youth groups are welcome, and we recommend any youth who attend would be accompanied by a potential mentor in ministry (church worker or volunteer)

Led by God's Word we train together to grow in Gospel. Our youth leadership training will be led by Julianna Shults, the head of the YouthLead initiative in the LCMS Youth Ministry office. The Missouri District will also train mentors from our churches.

Many youth fill leadership roles that go unrecognized – whether as a team captain in sports, a small group leader in church or school, or a summer VBS leader – we want to lift up our youth in whatever leadership roles they serve. And we need mentors to help our youth to see opportunities to serve in their own context, listen to their successes and failures, and finally help our youth to be accountable to the roles that God has placed them in.

This is very exciting time as we look to YouthLead Missouri. Please keep this next step of Missouri District youth ministry in your prayers and make plans to join us in February. More details about this event are coming soon.

More on MOScholars

Taxpayers in the state of Missouri now have the unique opportunity to direct their tax dollars to Lutheran education through a new credit program called MOScholars. The Missouri District of the LCMS is an approved organization within MOScholars, enabling them to use these funds to walk with students and their families to defray the cost of tuition at LCMS schools. All who pay taxes to the state of Missouri are eligible to reserve these credits and direct dollars to these scholarships. Doing so comes at no additional cost and takes just minutes to complete online.

This fall is a great time for taxpayers to participate in MOScholars, as there are currently more than 90 children on the waitlist to receive a scholarship to attend an LCMS school in Missouri. December 31st is the cutoff for helping these students this school year. Please head to the Missouri District's website at mo.lcms.org/mo-scholars to learn more about the program and begin the reservation process. Thank you for being a blessing to these families through MOScholars!

Upcoming Events

Visit mo.lcms.org/upcoming-events for more information on these events.

Lutheran College Fair

November 5

Webinar – *A Call to Action: Family Ministry*

November 9, 12PM

Reconciliation Coaches Training

November 12 & January 11

Missouri District Office Open House

December 2, 10AM–1PM

Webinar – *Building Relationships Despite Disagreements*

January 18, 12PM

Youth LEAD!

February 18–20

For more news from the District office, sign up for email communications at mo.lcms.org and follow us on social media.



Missouri District

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD